

# Getting connected with Digital Consulting Institute's George Schussel

## Q&A

### HOW DID YOU EARN YOUR FIRST DOLLAR?

Selling chewing gum door to door in Mansfield, Ohio,

when I was 9 years old.

### CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PERFECT EMPLOYEE?

No. But some traits include having a good, positive attitude, being able to do whatever is necessary to finish the job, intellectual curiosity, being able to take a position that might be unpopular and defend it, being able to write better than the average college graduate can today.

### WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT?

I think it's the growth of DCI, and, honestly, I'm one person in the cog here. I took an idea I had and now I'm part of a group creating value from that idea. If I were to leave tomorrow, it really would not have a significant impact on the business. That gives me great joy. I love for people to have independence. I like to be the guy off to the side and watching this whole organization get its kudos. The fact that I can go off to the lake during the summer and the organization continues to run well without me, that's a turn on for me.

### WHO IS YOUR ROLE MODEL?

A couple of people I admire: Michael Stonebraker, professor emeritus at Berkeley and founder of a couple of high-tech companies, because he was successful in the education world and the business world. His students are founders or chief technical officers of many different software companies. Another one is Gerry Cohen, presi-

dent and founder of Information Builders in New York. Not only has he been very successful in business – created a lot of jobs and a lot of value – but he has not let it go to his head. He has a great sense of humanity, is kind – the kind of person you'd want to go out to dinner with. Many CEO personas are very unattractive, lack humanity and acquire an arrogance, and I find that very distasteful. Cohen still loves to just sit down and talk about technology and exchange ideas. The fact that he's head of a \$300 million company – he's not impressed with that.

### HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR ROLE?

I used to be the key public speaker in the company. Now I'm a coach for others. Being a coach is more fun than being a quarterback.

### WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH?

While I absolutely am not the best at any one thing, I'm able to do a lot of things reasonably well.

### YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS?

Depends. My greatest weakness might also be my greatest strength. I'm the worst politician possible. I'm brutally straightforward. Tact is not my strong point at all.

### WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

The diversity of meeting a lot of different people, traveling a lot of different places and having a lot of different experiences.

### WHAT IS THE BEST PLACE YOU'VE BEEN?

In the early '90s, I was invited to South Africa to do a series of seminars and my host bundled in a safari to

## CEO PROFILE

**NAME:** George Schussel

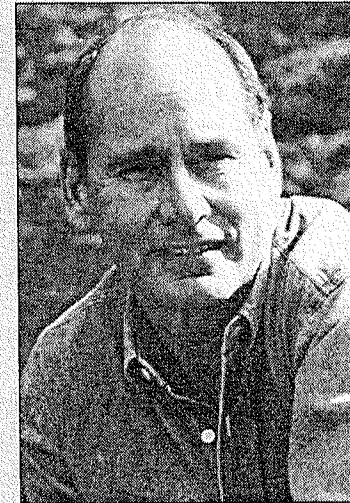
**AGE:** 54

**JOB:** Founder and CEO

**COMPANY:** Digital Consulting Institute

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor's degree in physics and math, University of California; master's degree in applied math and computer science, Harvard University; doctorate in marketing and computer science, Harvard Business School.

**HOBBIES:** Authored or co-authored several books and more than 50 articles or columns for leading industry journals. His



George Schussel

most recent book is "Rightsizing Information Systems."

**PERSONAL:** He and his wife, Sandi, live in Lynnfield and have two grown daughters.

Dr. Schussel was awarded the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers Computer Society's Computer Entrepreneur Award for 1998. That put him in good company. Other recipients of the award have included Microsoft's Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer, Apple Computer's Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs, Ken Olsen of the former Digital Equipment Corp., and William Hewlett and David Packard of Hewlett-Packard.

Botswana. And that was before Nelson Mandela came back to power and South Africa was still very controversial. I convinced my whole family to come with me. That was tremendous. There's not even a close second, and I've been to all the continents for business except Antarctica.

### THE WORST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB?

The adrenaline rush when a serious problem comes up – such as an air traffic controllers strike on the Sunday before a large event on Monday.

### WHAT IS THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT YOU'D LIKE TO FORGET?

Hearing about the JFK assassination. I was a student at Harvard. That was like the dawning of the end of the age

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