

## Tom Arenberg keeps up the good work



Tom Arenberg was lucky—he knew early on that he wanted to work for Arthur Andersen, Accenture’s precursor, and enrolled at Purdue University which he knew to be a recruiting ground for the firm. And indeed, after graduating with a degree in Mathematics and a Master of Science in Industrial Administration (equivalent to a Master of Business Administration), he joined Accenture. His successful 34-year career was spent in the Milwaukee office. He worked on the Harley-Davidson account for many years on a wide range of projects—and became an easy rider himself!

Accenture’s Milwaukee office has a strong tradition of community work, and Tom wanted to get involved. His wife Diane was also interested on contributing to the broader community, and so he tended to gravitate to charities in which she was involved. It’s a path, he says, that has brought him into contact with some great organizations.

“I loved my career at Accenture, particularly the satisfaction of creating the key strategic idea for the client. I also greatly enjoyed working with our clients and our team to mentor people and give them new places to go in their careers,” Tom says. “Non-profits need exactly the same sort of help.” Tom adds that standard business practices like strategic planning, process improvement, standard metrics and reporting package and organizational development tend to be neglected by non-profits—and yet can really make a significant difference.”

Tom has seen that this focus can free up 20 percent or more of overhead costs, which can be “re-invested” in the organization’s core services. This kind of efficiency improvement can also be a unique selling point for donors.

He has worked particularly closely with the [Next Door Foundation](#) and the [Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin](#) to implement such improvements. The Next Door Foundation is a multifaceted education center that helps Milwaukee central city children and families gain the skills they need to achieve sustainable success.

The results have been impressive. During his more than 30 years of involvement with the Foundation, Tom has devoted a lot of time and energy to fundraising—and over the last eight years, fundraising has increased by 50 percent. He sat on the board for the last nine years, and is currently the Board President. The Foundation has received a Center of Excellence award from the Governor of Wisconsin, and a five-star quality rating from the state—one of only two Milwaukee organizations to achieve this status.

Tom also helped Next Door Foundation create a strategic plan that has freed up 20 percent of the budget previously devoted to administration, and applied it to programs. He also created and chaired the Advocacy Committee to give the organization a voice in the state

legislature.

“What’s really pleasing is that there is now a waiting list for the Next Door Foundation’s services—we are really making a difference,” Tom says. “Ninety-five percent of the families now have regular dental and medical care providers and don’t have to rely on emergency rooms. Best of all, our students are now testing at the same level as privileged suburban children for school readiness.”

Tom was able to leverage his unique position in both organizations to coordinate fundraising, construction and start-up efforts to allow the Children’s Hospital to provide the medical and dental care for the families in the Next Door Foundation neighborhood.

Tom’s contribution to the Children’s Hospital has been equally far-reaching. He currently chairs the Policy Committee and is an advisor for a major information systems project. “Policy may sound dull but it’s a vital role that aims to embed process rigor across internal processes. These had developed somewhat haphazardly as the organization grew rapidly over the past 20 years,” Tom explains. “The result is a better allocation of costs and returns, which provides more funding for operations and research. To date, the impact is significant across the endowment of over \$300 million.”

Tom makes a point of keeping in touch with former colleagues at Accenture and attends any local alumni events. He has set himself a goal of involving young Accenture managers in each of the organizations with which he is involved. “Working for a non-profit at the start of your career can be especially rewarding as it’s not only a chance to make a wider contribution—it provides a low-risk environment in which one can gain a broad range of leadership skills, and take on some significant responsibility,” he explains. “I believe working for a community organization can really help build a career that’s successful and satisfying.”

