

ALLIANCE OF CHIEF EXECUTIVES

BRINGING LEADERS TOGETHER

EXCHANGING STRATEGIC INSIGHTS

TAPPING COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE



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Winter 2009

Since 1996 the Alliance of Chief Executives has been helping CEOs solve their most profound, strategic challenges.

As the premier organization for chief executives in Northern California, we gather leaders from virtually every industry and market sector to engage in confidential exchanges that typically wouldn't—or couldn't—take place anywhere else.

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When Down Turns Up

These CEOs aren't waiting until times get better — they're preparing for them now

By Warren Lutz

When asked what his company is doing to prepare for the next upturn in the economy, Peter Sortwell (Group 107), CEO of Arborwell, a commercial and residential tree care company, couldn't help but chuckle. "We're just trying not to dis-improve!" he said.

The joke was a brief reminder that these are not easy times for CEOs. But Sortwell and other members of the Alliance of Chief Executives aren't content merely riding out the current economic storm. These leaders are acting—right now—to gain advantages for when the financial cycle is back on the upswing.

For many, the first order of business

is taking a look at prices. Sortwell compares his numbers with his competition's, because he knows his customers are shopping around. "Everyone is going out and getting other numbers," he said. "We're just having to sharpen our pencil just a little bit more."

Others are looking for ways to keep prices low. "We know that we have to be able to hit aggressive price points," said CEO Paul Levitan (Group 212), CEO of Richmond-based Galaxy Desserts, a leading



*Peter Sortwell
CEO, Arborwell*

Continued on page 6

Tim Brown on 'Design Thinking'

Inspiration, ideation and implementation are key



*Tim Brown
CEO, IDEO*

By ACE Staff

Innovative ideas are all around us—it's managing innovation that is the real challenge.

Fortunately, Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, one of the world's leading design firms specializing in innovative strategies, was recently on hand to share the lessons he's learned about managing innovation with Alliance members.

Brown spoke about "design thinking," a human-centered approach to innovation that focuses on being able to answer three questions: What do people need or want, are we able to make it, and are we able to make money at it?

"Insights are the fuel for innovation," Brown said, adding that "design thinkers" use the entire world as their source.

Brown spoke about the three phases of managing innovation: Inspiration, ideation and implementation. Some of his takeaways included:

Compare problems to an analogous situation – such as

Continued on page 7

Bay Area CEOs Shall Lead the Way

Innovation and learning are more important than ever

After an extended period of growth, our economy has entered a period of greater uncertainty and volatility. In an attempt to understand the unprecedented changes,



PAUL WITKAY
FOUNDER

I recently read a book by David Smick titled "The World is Curved." Thomas Friedman's best-selling book "The World is Flat" explained how the convergence of global forces created a golden age of wealth creation and poverty reduction.

"The World is Curved" discusses the threats created by the globalization of the world economy.

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, most of the world embraced the capitalistic view that economic success results from the innovations created by a risk-taking entrepreneurial class. A new climate of free trade enabled global financial firms to allocate capital across borders and create risky new financial vehicles that grew global financial assets from \$12 trillion in 1980 to \$140 trillion! The introduction of China and India to the global economy increased the global workforce from 2.7 billion people to 6 billion. Economic growth even moved a billion people out of poverty since 1980.

However, the bad news is that today's global economy is unstable and unsettling. Jobs and investments flow around the world and disrupt local economies. Even during the expansion, 2.5 million U.S. jobs would disappear every month and an equal or greater number were created. It's not just GM and Ford that are threatened by global competition. High-tech corporations as strong as IBM and Microsoft are threatened by open-source systems and fast-growing Internet-based companies.

The future promises more volatility because government officials hold onto an illusion that they have the ability to "manage" future events. Policymakers find entrepreneurial capitalism disconcerting because it is difficult to provide economic stability in a system which, by definition, includes both success and failure. Recent financial events have demonstrated the sensitivity of our modern financial systems and few government officials understand the risks of unintended consequences when introducing new tax or regulatory policies to attempt to address local issues.

The globalization of financial systems has created a world economy in which the U.S. is no longer able to "call

the shots." A 2007 McKinsey Global Institute report identified the four primary "power brokers" of the new global economy to be: (1) investors from oil-exporting countries; (2) Asian central bankers and their sovereign wealth funds; (3) hedge funds; and (4) private equity firms. These "Big Four" power brokers shape our financial systems by controlling assets of nearly \$10 trillion and growing.

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As CEOs, we cannot control the winds of global financial markets. We can only strive to understand the conditions in which we operate and identify opportunities for successful initiatives. I believe that the secret to building a robust economy is to create an environment which supports creativity and innovation and attracts investment capital.

We are fortunate to be living in the Bay Area – the most innovative region on the planet. It is imperative that we nurture our uniquely entrepreneurial environment which provides a model for U.S. competitiveness in the new global economy. As Bay Area CEOs, our organizations must constantly innovate to stay competitive and our people must embrace continuous learning to adapt to new jobs and/or organizations.

Kevin Surace, CEO of Serious Materials, is a great example of how Bay Area CEOs are applying Silicon Valley philosophies to old industries that stopped innovating years ago. Serious Materials is creating new jobs throughout the U.S. by developing and manufacturing sustainable green building materials.

Although the economic conditions in the coming year will be challenging at best, history has shown that downturns are great times to create new companies and re-structure old ones for future success. The Alliance of Chief Executives was created to enable CEOs to come together in confidential, safe environments to share strategic insights and generate new ideas.

Our members have told us that it is important to come together as often as possible to challenge their assumptions and create fresh approaches. These are times when the impact of every strategic action is magnified.

Thank you to all of the members of our Alliance community who willingly share their experience and ideas with their fellow CEOs. Together, we are creating a dynamic, competitive business environment that will be a model for the world. Please let me know if you have any suggestions or if we can be of any assistance.

Paul Witkay is the founder and CEO of the Alliance of Chief Executives. He may be contacted at paulwitkay@allianceofceos.com.

Keeping Control of the Top Team

Member Case Study: Galaxy Desserts CEO Paul Levitan shows what to do when your top sales exec is putting up barriers

Positive and optimistic are traits I see over and over again as I've met with hundreds of chief executives. This certainly was the case as I met with Paul Levitan, CEO of Galaxy Desserts. I donned a hair net and beard net as he gave me a personal tour of the 52,000-sq-ft factory that's been featured on



CASE STUDY by ROBERT SHER

Food Network, and that today churns out nearly 300,000 handmade desserts each day. As we walked along the waterfront to our restaurant, it emerged that this story stems from the same optimism that

is so prevalent in chief executives: The optimistic belief that executives who aren't performing well and require babysitting might still be worth keeping. Most chief executives will recognize this story from his or her own past. The executive in question started as a consultant, then converted to an employee. I'll refer to him by the title he requested, and in fact insisted upon, "Chief Orbiter." His real function was to lead the sales department, but he didn't want the mundane title of VP Sales. He asserted that he would need broader authority to really push the sales ahead. As he was about to be hired, he presented a 40-page employment contract to Paul, who carefully, and with the help of a lawyer, modified and signed it.

Executives like the Orbiter are masters at setting the hook. In his time working for the firm as a consultant, he had already showed some signs of greatness, kicking open a few doors, and creating a mystique about what he did and how he did it. I've had a "mystique builder" working for me, and it was amazing how effective they can be at tapping into the optimism we business leaders have.

Paul's sales had been rocketing upward (as they are today), and he was hungry for some strong bandwidth on

the team so he could concentrate on finance and internal operations. After all, this is a real manufacturing operation, making real products with machines and people--there is great complexity.

I start to worry when an executive has an oversized need to be special. Sure, I can understand that there is a need for employment contracts in some situations, but a special 40-pager? The need for such a special title strikes me as odd, too. Ideally, I prefer executives who are more focused on moving the company forward than making sure that everybody treats them as special. As a Californian, I respect diversity and the benefit from people leading their lives in non-typical ways. Why can't someone work really odd hours, blending their job with their personal life?

Paul kept his Alliance group apprised of the Orbiter situation, and they had just one overriding response: Fire him.

Why can't someone want a distinctive title? Each on its own might be just fine, but when what's driving it all is the need to feel special, look out. Arguably, some of the best salespeople love to be in the limelight, love to save the day, but more than likely, they are NOT top executive material.

The year 1999 rolled quickly by, and the Chief Orbiter wove himself into the fabric at Galaxy. He completely dominated the sales area, then began systematically pushing Paul out of "his area." Paul's partner, Jean-Yves Charon, handles the creative side and product development, and was even further from customers. Rather than complete transparency, the Orbiter's role

became the black box from which sales would emerge, and which only he could navigate. He made it clear to Paul that the sales team was loyal to him, and that they stayed only because of the special presence of the Chief Orbiter himself.

Lack of transparency and the creation of fiefdoms (or silos) is another red flag.

Teams should be loyal to the company, and should be interfacing with people in other departments almost as comfortably as their own. Executives should be working to reduce barriers within the company, not to erect them. That's not to say that there aren't lines of authority, and that anyone, even a chief executive, should be allowed to meddle in a department. But there should be few, if any, secrets.

Even though the Orbiter always had big new opportunities "about to break wide open," sales growth flattened out. From 2002 to 2004, sales growth didn't look anything like the end of the 90's. But he did a great job of spinning his lackluster performance each time it came up, and increasingly was the center of company drama. The sales slump was always someone else's fault. But if only the Orbiter had more control he could have made great strides forward. Increasingly, he was behaving with the authority and rights of an owner, as though he were partners with Paul and Jean-Yves.



Paul Levitan
CEO, Galaxy Desserts

This story continues with a list of keys to successful partnerships on the Alliance website, in our forums. To go right to the page with the story, click or type http://www.allianceofceos.com/forum/leadership/2009/keeping_control_of_the_top_tea.php into your Web browser.

Robert Sher is an Alliance Director and principal of CEO to CEO. He may be contacted at rsher@allianceofceos.com.

Intuit's Bill Campbell rallies the team

By ACE Staff

Imagine a Superbowl for CEOs and you're on the team, in the locker room, huddled around the coach for that pep talk and strategy discussion.

That's what it was like on December 5th when Bill Campbell, Chairman of Intuit, came out again to speak to Alliance members at the Santa Clara Techmart. In his usual no-BS manner, he told us that it is wartime now, and we have to act like wartime generals.

That means that we have to be decisive—still listening to our teams, but speeding up the process to make fast conclusions and decisions. We have to be willing to break the tie, or to not allow our teams to chicken out when faced with a tough decision. Campbell also spent time talking about the need for top teams to support the CEO's decision, and to dismiss anyone who defies your decisions.

Real leaders emerge when they combine strong and rigorous management practices with the art of leadership. Being a leader isn't enough in wartime—you have to run the business, too. And that means tight planning, follow



up and keeping everyone accountable.

Credibility for a CEO and their team is earned when you make your numbers. Ideally, that's the top and bottom line. But if you can't make the top line, then make the bottom line. Excuses don't count.

Four management practices to pay attention to, according to Campbell:

1. Focus. "Put more wood behind fewer arrows." In wartime, you need to have a high hit rate. Choose your battles carefully and focus on winning them.
2. Product Management. What really wins in the long term is a great product. Great products make great sales. So make sure you have an ace product manager, and take great care of him or her.
3. Don't do across-the-board salary cuts. You'll lose your best people. Treat the top performers well, even continue to give them raises. Treat the poor performers poorly and tell them why. They'll either work harder or leave, both good outcomes.
4. Open communications. Let them all know—the entire company—what is going on. Have no secrets. They'll find it out anyway, and waste tons of time over the water cooler. Be clear to the whole team what the realities are and what needs to be accomplished to succeed.

Members throughout the Alliance are welcome to attend any of our keynote breakfasts and meet other members. Look on the back page for a list of upcoming events, or go to the "Events" section of the Alliance of CEOs website.



Top left: Alliance members getting to know one another at our CEO Progressive Dinner at the Left Bank in San Jose. **Top:** Members of Alliance Group 341 visit El Camino Surgery Center. (Left to right: Bud Michael, Lisa Cooper and Karl Hansen.) **Left:** A panel of Alliance CEOs led a forum on Innovation at JFK University. The panel included Robert Sher, Brian Dougherty, Lars Barfod, Ted Lamson, Dennis Erokan, Uwe Druckenmueller and Paul Witkay.

CEO Roundtables



Life Sciences Partnerships

Life Sciences CEOs met together in this CEO Roundtable to discuss the challenges of life sciences partnerships. Due to the increasing cost of commercializing new products, coupled with the weak capital markets, many CEOs are exploring partnerships earlier in the life cycle of their company to meet capital demands. This increased focus on partnership, coupled with Big Pharma's depleted pipeline, causes increased focus on partnership terms and the need for multiple products in the private company's pipeline. This current market dynamic specifically heightens the CEOs fear of "selling" the company through a partnership that is too restrictive and potentially exposing core intellectual property to competitors.

Sponsored by: **Deloitte.**

Successful Technology Partnerships

Technology companies play in a complex world that often requires companies to work together to enable rapid product development, efficient supply chains, effective marketing and other strategies and tactics. The Alliance brought tech CEOs together to share techniques that have resulted in successful partnerships as well as challenges with partnerships that aren't working so well.



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Alliance Series Sponsors support a series of events for a selected group of Alliance CEOs.

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Alliance Holiday Dinner

Alliance members celebrated the holidays at the Orinda Country Club on December 4. Our members have consistently enjoyed our annual Alliance Holiday Dinners, and this year was no exception.

Members from throughout the Alliance came together and were able to get to know other CEOs in other Alliance groups.

Look on our website for information about our upcoming Spring Dinner in San Jose on May 27th and Fall Dinner in San Francisco on September 24th. These Alliance Dinners are free to members and their guests.



Preparing For An Upswing: 'Great year to upgrade talent'

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U.S. producer of individual gourmet desserts. "That means, for us, that we have to get even better at our manufacturing process and reduce our relative cost position."

Along with competitive pricing, smart CEOs recognize this is no time to ignore client needs in general. "We're reaching out, making sure we understand their business, understand their challenges, and to the extent we can, react," said Mike Gregoire (Q100), CEO of Dublin-based Taleo Corporation, the leading provider of on-demand talent management solutions.

"We think that pays off in customer satisfaction and long-term goodwill," Gregoire added. "What a lot of companies will do is to lower head count in customer support... In my opinion, that is a negative spiral."

David Hayes (Group 272), CEO of San Francisco-based Skyline Construction, did something odd, considering the current financial climate: His firm increased its sales and marketing budget 25 percent.

When projects start back up, Hayes hopes Skyline—a full-service general contractor committed to green building—will be the first one his customers remember. "We feel this is the time to spend more money on the relationships you have."

How did Hayes afford it? Skyline had planned "a very large office expansion," but nixed it and redirected the funds. "We decided to stay lean."

Besides buckling down, however, some CEOs are making moves on offense, as well. Recruiting is popular, as savvy leaders know there's some top talent available right now.

"We've taken on two or three people from other companies that were let go," Sortwell said. "It's probably, in the short term, not a smart move for us. But in the long term, we'll have more talent to take advantage of."

Skyline is on "a really aggressive recruiting run," says Hayes. "We think it's going to be a great year to steal talent."

Hayes' company is hiring only LEED AP construction management grads and placing them in LEED projects to get real experience. "We became a certified Green Business to walk the walk and attract talent," he said.

For some, it's also a good time to be looking for acquisitions and partnerships.

Levitan said his company is "always" looking for deals. "We see an even bigger opportunity now, since some of our competitors may be retrenching and just trying to survive," he said. "We're in a strong position. I'm sure some of our competitors aren't... We want to be aggressive out there, and build a business."



David Hayes
CEO, Skyline
Construction

JR Matthews (Group 305), a principal at Tregaron Capital Company, stressed the importance of being careful making deals in the current economic environment. "Actually we're very skeptical about the revenue claims of companies we're ready to buy,"

Matthews said. "But then, we're looking heavily at acquisition opportunities right now."

Tregaron, which invests in small to mid-sized companies with EBITDA between \$2 and \$10 million, said when competition closes down, it creates a "better landscape" in which to compete. "That's a little Darwinian," Matthews said. "But that's the nature of business, right?"

However, it's clear that a major focus of these CEOs is on improving from within, with strategies focused on implementing more efficient communications and better organizational structures.

Andy Coan (Group 305), CEO of San Mateo-based network service provider Splice Communications, said his company plans to "really focus and double our efforts" in the New



Andy Coan
CEO, Splice
Communications

Year, including cross-training staff and becoming "a potentially lean and efficient company."

"Another key business practice will be to thoroughly track performance across all segments of our business, and make very quick business decisions in 2009," Coan said. "Businesses cannot afford to delay decision-making in this uncertain economy."

Others find it a great time to restruc-

ture. At the beginning of the year, Skyline Construction switched to a "pod" management structure, creating teams focused on their specific areas that run their own P&L.

The goal is two-fold. "We are hoping to capture the entrepreneurial fire of a small start up team for each pod and hopefully grow them into strong business units," Hayes said. "The other goal, he said, is preparing senior management to take on new business ventures in the future."

Staff retention is also a key focus. In an uncertain economy, there is always a threat that a top member of your team could leave.

According to Gregoire, the loyalty of Generation 'Y' employees can be fragile. They'll move on if they are feeling they can't "win" — which means Taleo is trying to be as transparent and communicative as possible. "We are properly picking up the

cadence of our communications, and celebrating our wins a little bit more robustly, and being very careful with where we spend our money," Gregoire said.

Although Galaxy Desserts has gotten more conservative with salaries and bonuses, it has "re-instituted" a "daily huddle" for senior staff. Levitan said it's been energizing.

There's a few simple rules: The meeting lasts five to ten minutes. No one can sit down. There are three agenda points. Everyone gives a quick update on what they're doing. "We know we have to be able to react quickly to take advantage of opportunities," Levitan said. "Great internal communication is vital."

Sadly, letting people go is sometimes vital, too.

"We've taken an opportunity to really look hard at the company and see where we're weak," Levitan said. "We let a few people go who just weren't doing a great job..."

You gotta make sure everybody's pulling their own weight."

By aggressively focusing their organizations on better times ahead, these CEOs are certainly doing their share.



JR Matthews
Principal,
Tregaron Capital



Mike Gregoire
CEO, Taleo
Corporation

Warren Lutz is Editor of the Alliance of Chief Executives' newsletter. He may be contacted at wlutz@allianceofceos.com.

Members In The News

Kimpton on Fortune's List of 100 Best Companies to Work For

February 2, 2009

Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants made Fortune's list of the 100 Best Companies to Work For by motivating employees with new training and reward programs and reducing hourly worker schedules. Michael Depatie (Q100) is CEO of Kimpton.



Serious Materials Bids for shuttered Chicago Factory

January 15, 2009

Sunnyvale-based Serious Materials has emerged as a potential buyer for Republic Windows and Doors factory, giving hope to more than 300 workers left unemployed after the plant's abrupt closing. Kevin Surace (Q100) is CEO of Serious Materials.



Intelleflex Announces India Product Line

January 15, 2009

Intelleflex Corporation, the leader in Extended Capability RFID solutions, products and technologies, announced the availability of its product line in India after successful rollouts in Europe and South Korea within the past year. Rich Bravman (Q200) is CEO of Intelleflex.



Alter-G Secures \$8 Million

January 13, 2009

Alter-G, a privately held medical device company based in Menlo Park California, has secured an \$8 million round of series B funding from Versant Ventures. Alliance member Lars Barford (Group 110) is the CEO of Alter-G.



Tan Le on the Cover of Inc. Magazine

December 1, 2008

Alliance member Tan Le (Group 307), CEO of Emotiv Systems, was featured on the cover of the December issue of Inc. Magazine. Emotiv has created a brain-wave-reading headset that lets people create action from their thoughts.



Planet Metrics Chosen to Measure Carbon for 2009 CES

November 11, 2008

Planet Metrics, a Carbon Information Management (CIM) company, and the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) announced a partnership to measure and analyze the amount of carbon and other greenhouse gases (GHG) emitted as a result of 2009 International Consumer Electronics Show held in January in Las Vegas. Alliance member Andy Leventhal (Group 308) is Planet Metrics' CEO.



Tregaron Completes Investment in Endurance

October 27, 2008

Tregaron Capital announced that, with co-investors Accel-KKR and Management, it has completed the acquisition of Endurance International Group a leading web hosting roll-up. Alliance member JR Matthews (Group 305) is Principal of Tregaron.



Wohler Technologies Announces Acquisition

October 15, 2008

Wohler Technologies, the world leader in in-rack audio and video monitoring, has purchased Europa Australia to provide unique and cost-effective high-end solutions for the broadcast industry. Alliance member Carl Dempsey (Group 110) is Wohler's President and CEO.



Tim Brown: Innovation in a downturn is extra valuable

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how a pit crew is like an emergency room for race cars.

- Prototypes must be tangible and allow you to learn.
- Most ideas die inside the organization – you've got to market them internally.
- Story telling is very important. Tell stories, not concepts.
- Design is divergent thinking.
- Business is convergent thinking.
- One must have constraints for the best creative thinking. The right set is critical.
- Innovation in a downturn is extra valuable.
- The CEO's role is to ask the right questions.

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Tim Brown addresses Alliance members November 14 at the Banker's Club in San Francisco.

Upcoming Alliance Events

For an updated list of all Alliance events, go to www.allianceofceos.com/events2

The core of the Alliance is our private CEO groups which meet throughout Northern California. Because the collective experience within the Alliance is truly extraordinary, we bring CEOs together in a variety of additional ways to enable our members to connect with other CEOs in meaningful ways. If you would like to be invited to any of the Alliance events below, please contact Laurel Madal at (925) 942-2400 ext. 201 or lmadal@allianceofceos.com.



Keynote: Tom Siebel, Founder of Siebel Systems; Friday, February 6 in Santa Clara

Tom Siebel, founder and former Chairman & CEO of Siebel Systems, will be our keynote. Tom built Siebel into a leading global software company with more than 8,000 employees in 32 countries and over \$2 billion in revenues. He is also the author of three books: "Taking Care of eBusiness," "Cyber Rules" and "Virtual Selling." Breakfast begins at 7:30 a.m. at Techmart in Santa Clara.

Keynote: Eamonn Kelly, CEO of Global Business Network; Friday, February 13 in San Francisco

Eamonn Kelly, CEO of the renowned California-based future-oriented network and consulting firm, Global Business Network, and author of "Powerful Times," will share his views of the future. Breakfast begins at 7:30 a.m. at the Banker's Club in San Francisco.



Keynote: Michael Gregoire, CEO of Taleo Corporation; Friday, February 20 in San Ramon

Fellow Alliance member, Michael Gregoire, CEO of Taleo Corporation, the leading talent management solutions provider, is the featured speaker. Taleo helps organizations assess, acquire, develop, and align their workforce for improved business performance. Breakfast begins at 7:30 a.m. at the San Ramon Valley Conference Center.

Life Science CEO Roundtable: Tuesday, February 24 in Palo Alto

Given the economic environment, few life sciences firms have access to new funds and many are grappling for ways to extend their runway until conditions change. Life Science CEOs will discuss the challenges they face and the actions they are taking in our CEO Roundtable, "Extending the Runway Without Fresh Equity." Event begins at 7:30 a.m. in Palo Alto and is sponsored by Deloitte.

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Keynote: Judy Estrin, CEO of JLABS; Friday, April 3 in Santa Clara

This Regional Alliance Meeting will feature Judy Estrin, former CTO of Cisco Systems and author of "Closing the Innovation Gap," who will join us to discuss her views on the "innovation gap." Event begins at 7:30 a.m. at Techmart in Santa Clara.

Keynote: David Thomson, "Blueprint to a Billion"; Friday, May 8 in San Francisco

David Thomson, best-selling author of "Blueprint to a Billion," will share insights on how to transform a small business into a high growth business that can achieve exponential revenue growth all the way to a billion and beyond. Event begins at 7:30 a.m. at Banker's Club in San Francisco.



Alliance Spring Dinner: Wednesday, May 27 at the Silicon Valley Capital Club in San Jose

Join Alliance members and their guests for a wine tasting reception and dinner at the Silicon Valley Capital Club in San Jose. The wine reception begins at 6 p.m. Reserve your space early. Note: The Alliance Spring Dinner is FREE for all Alliance members and their guests.



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