



Mike Soenen, CEO of ClearTrial, loves the thrill of jumping from one proverbial rock to another, as is required in running a young, fast-growing company.

### Driven. Diverse.

**NAME:** Mike Soenen

**CURRENT POSITION:** CEO, ClearTrial

**EDUCATION:** B.S., Electrical & Computer Engineering, University of Notre Dame

**DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH:** May 1967, Chicago

**FIRST INDUSTRY-RELATED JOB:** Andersen Consulting

**DREAM JOB:** Architect

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:** DIA; Tufts Executive Roundtable; Illinois Technology Association; Irish Angels

**CONNECTED VIA:** LinkedIn

**WORDS TO LIVE BY:** Bite off more than you can chew, and then chew like hell

## MIKE SOENEN LEAPING IN

**JUGGLING MULTIPLE ROLES WHILE JUMPING FROM ROCK TO ROCK TO SURMOUNT CHALLENGES, MIKE SOENEN BROUGHT HIS SOFTWARE COMPANY FROM MARGINAL TO MAGNIFICENT IN A VERY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME.**

CEO Mr. Soenen has taken ClearTrial from a few employees, a product idea, and no customers to a company whose software today is relied on by seven of the top 10 biotech companies and many of the largest companies in the industry to plan, source, and track their clinical trials faster and more accurately.

When he co-founded the company in 2004, he had to manage multiple roles: CEO, chief operating officer, chief financial officer, head of sales, marketing, and engineering, and product management. He even found enough time to make his own coffee.

Founded on a mission of developing software that would help biopharmaceutical companies run clinical trials more efficiently, ClearTrial was well ahead of the curve in developing solutions to the pressures that are now shaping the industry.

The first time Mr. Soenen heard from a happy customer it was like a shot of adrenalin, but stories of successful outcomes from clients are still as meaningful because it means the company is helping its clients develop and produce treatments in a faster, more cost-efficient manner.

Balancing all he does with a healthy irreverence,

### DID YOU KNOW?

Mike Soenen once ran with the bulls in Pamplona, which he would like to chalk up to youthful immortality, except he'd do it again.



Mr. Soenen thrives on the excitement of building and sustaining a fast-growing company. He learned a lot from his first start-up, where he says he was fortunate to be rewarded with a very successful exit.

It became clear to Mr. Soenen where his passions lay after spending a few years at a Fortune 500 company, where the most challenging aspect was adjusting to a slower culture that resisted taking a risk. He likes being able to quickly put into motion adjustments or ideas that can solve a challenge.

His experience is probably best summarized by a quote from Dan Bricklin, the inventor of VisiCalc, the first spreadsheet application, who said, "In big business, when you need to cross a river, you simply design a bridge, build it, and march right across. But in a small venture, you must climb on the rocks. You don't know exactly where each step will take you, but you do know the general direction you're moving in. If you make a mistake, you get wet. If your calculations are wrong, you have to inch your way back to safety and find a different route. And, as you jump from rock to slippery rock, you have to like the feeling."

It didn't take long for Mr. Soenen to realize he enjoys jumping from rock to rock.

## HEALTHY DISRUPTION

Change is something many in the industry find uncomfortable, but it's where Mike Soenen thrives.

Mr. Soenen co-founded ClearTrial on the premise of streamlining the clinical trials process. What the company's software does is to make the planning, forecasting, and tracking of clinical projects and financial performance faster and more accurate. Recognizing the paradigm shifts that face the industry, Mr. Soenen, CEO of ClearTrial, says the challenge for companies in the industry will be to transform in the face of the margin and productivity pressures that are hitting them square on. It's the classic industry maturity curve, he says, and it will be interesting to see which companies have the ability to make the tough decisions that will enable them to turn this tight corner without ending up on the guardrail.

Sharing insights is certainly one key element to moving the needle. In his own case, Mr. Soenen observes a lot of companies and talks with many leaders in the life-sciences, entrepreneurial, and financing segments whose different perspectives help him distill his own thoughts and strategies.

He draws inspiration from all aspects of industry and life. He admires Steve Jobs for a rare blend of design elegance, functional pragmatism, and healthy disruption that is unmatched. He is inspired by his wife, who keeps him balanced, and his parents, who with very little, created a lot for their children, modeling and instilling the values of hard work, education, persistence, and broad perspective across the arts, the sciences, and the social dimension.

Generally, Mr. Soenen draws inspiration from people who combine their creative vision with a relentless pursuit of excellence to accomplish great things.

His drive is unmistakable, and he says while his parents taught him to work to his greatest potential, they didn't explain how to tell when you've reached it — needless to say, he's still striving for the best.

Having learned so much from others and in his own business pursuits, Mr. Soenen is now eager to share his experiences and learnings with other entrepreneurs.

Mr. Soenen is by no means wrapped up entirely in his professional pursuits. His interests are diverse, spanning music, sports, the

arts, technical, financial, and creative. And he describes his three sons as the most important accomplishments of his life. ♦

### Getting Personal with

#### MIKE SOENEN

**FAMILY:** Married, three sons

**HOBBIES:** Water skiing, snow skiing, coaching football, fitness, travel

**GIVING BACK:** Mercy Home for Boys & Girls, American Cancer Society, National Multiple Sclerosis Society

**BUCKET LIST:** Dramatically improve the life of a complete stranger; visit outer space; see the Great Barrier Reef; learn to play classical Spanish guitar; go to the Winter Olympics

**INSPIRATION:** His wife Karen; his mom and dad; Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, creative visionaries who pursue excellence to accomplish great things

**TOP IPOD DOWNLOADS:** Salute Your Solution by the Raconteurs; Hard Sun by Eddie Vedder; Stepped on My J'z by Nelly; Ain't No Rest for the Wicked by Cage the Elephant

**MOST UNUSUAL PLACE VISITED:** Las Vegas

**LIFE LESSONS:** You don't learn anything with your mouth open

**UNDER THE CLOAK OF INVISIBILITY:** The BP board room