

## Remembering Mike Tracey

When it comes to job dedication, you'd be hard pressed to find anyone better than Mike Tracey.

For three decades, he worked alongside clients to make their projects more efficient and more productive using our products. Always going the extra mile, no task or request was too small or too large. So much so that just days before passing peacefully at Matthews House Hospice in Alliston, Canada, Mike Tracey was still helping our clients with their sticky issues.

Since he first joined us in 1991, Mike made all of our lives better at ECHOtape. Quick with a laugh, witty banter, or a hug, as the occasion required, he was also one of the best and most experienced tape experts we had. A highly valuable and respected member of our team, the effects of his passing are already being felt here by his fellow employees and management. We will miss him dearly.

Here are just a few tributes from some of our staff:

It is hard to fathom the loss of a great colleague like Mike Tracey, who I have had the pleasure of working beside for more than 30 years. We'll all miss his dry sense of humor, his dogged determination to succeed and his tremendous loyalty to his customers and ECHOtape. In Mike Tracey we have lost one of the most knowledgeable pressure sensitive tape people on the planet. ~Mike Grevatt, Senior VP Sales



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I just loved and will miss our Purchasing vs. Sales tongue and cheek banters over the years. ~*Michael Gauthier, Senior Strategic Buyer*

I worked with Mike for just over 20 years. Although we didn't speak every day, when we did he always made me laugh. I will miss that. ~*Ilana Perlman, Human Resources Manager*

I had the pleasure of working with Mike for over 16 years and will miss him dearly. He personally broke me in at ECHOtape and taught me loyalty to customers and his methods (although unusual) will remain with me forever. ~*Nathalie Abdelhadi, Strategic Sales Support Coordinator*

My mother and I had the privilege to work with Mike over the last 30 years and his commitment to his customers and tape applications was incredible. He helped teach me the ropes early on as we grew up in the business together. I am grateful we had the opportunity in December to thank him for his dedication and commitment. He will always remain a part of our ECHOtape family. ~ *Cherie Edelstein, President*

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# Wishing You Health & Joy This Holiday Season

As 2021 draws to a close, we at [ECHOtape](#) are feeling so very grateful. Grateful for your extraordinary support, our exceptional team, and the outstanding communities in which we work and live.

It is this spirit that we find ourselves reflecting on how we can give back. As many of you know, in lieu of sending cards and gifts to our partners during the holiday season, we choose to donate our holiday budget to a charity geared to helping others. This is a tradition we have proudly kept for more than 25 years, generously supporting such charities as [The Red Cross](#), [Habitat for Humanity](#), [Doctors Without Borders](#), and more.

This year, we have selected the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#) and [Mental Health America](#) to benefit from our donation!



During these last 18 months, the issue of mental health roared to the surface, affecting all of us in a myriad of ways. Along with the physical health impacts of the disease, COVID-19 has led to self and social isolation, disconnection from family and friends, quarantine and lockdown

resulting in more people experiencing feelings of helplessness, isolation, grief, anxiety and depression. Demand for health support services has increased exponentially, and **CMHA** and **MHA** are working overtime to offer tangible resources and support to men and women experiencing mental health challenges.

The holidays are still not as they were, but we hope the important things remain—spending time with loved ones, sharing joy and giving back however we can. We hope that through our participation, we can make a difference. And please... if you are struggling with mental health issues, we are always here to listen.

We wish you good health, happiness, and peace in a new year filled with hope. Seek out what brings you comfort and do more of what brings you joy.

Happy Holidays from all of us at ECHOtape.



# Customer Spotlight: Train2Build with Bill Robinson

Bill Robinson is a nationally known construction trainer and presenter and owner of [Train2Build](#) and Train2Rebuild, a company that provides education for the building industry and homeowners. Headquartered in New Orleans, Robinson hosts consulting and training programs that focus on detailing the building envelope in the hot/humid climate, best practices for installing doors and windows, flood hardy building materials and methods, and moisture management in the Gulf Coast region.

And it just so happens that one of his favorite building materials is double-sided tape. Which makes Bill Robinson one of our favorite customers, obviously.

**How did you first learn about ECH0tape?** Through blogging, actually. Amanda Voss reached out to me when she was researching a series of stories on moisture management and [adhesive trends](#).



**When did you start using our products?** I had become fascinated with the powers of double-sided tape through my work with [JLC](#), but ECHOtape was new to me. I reached out to Steve Underhill and he sent a couple of sample rolls for me to try and I was blown away. That was three or four years ago. I've been using ECHOtape ever since.





**How many different ECHOtape products have you worked with? Any favorites?** Although I have used your seaming tape, I'm mostly interested in double-sided tapes, using them in applications where I need to adhere to a substrate that I can't typically drive nails through. Or even ones where you can, because I don't like the idea of penetrations. Any hole, no matter how small, has the opportunity to become a problem when there is moisture involved. Double-sided tape allows me to have the same powerful hold, but with the added benefit of keeping

things dry. For windows and doors, I am really impressed with the Double Sided Acrylic Foam tapes, [UB-F3504](#) and [UB-F3557](#).

And I'm a firm believer in [seaming housewrap](#) with tape, instead of fasteners or nails. Sure, it takes a bit more time, but the air sealing benefits are worth the extra effort.

**What's been the biggest surprise using tape in your construction projects?** The surprise is the versatility. The reward is the adhesion level. A nail is a nail; it has one job and does one thing. Caulk, which is something that I use often, is more versatile, but it's still limited. Tape is truly multi-purpose. The different adhesive components allow me to choose the best stick for the job. And it allows me to connect, or adhere to different substrates that were previously huge challenges, such as irregular surfaces. The cool thing is that I can weather strip without fasteners and ensure a moisture-resistant barrier.

**What has your customer experience been like?** Phenomenal! My go-to guy is Steve Underhill. Mostly because I'm old school; I like talking through my challenges and you can't do that with a chatbot. Steve listens, he's genuinely curious, and what he's doing makes me look good. The results speak for themselves.

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**What's next for you and your business?** Bottom line: I'm a building envelope guy that lives in the humid Gulf Coast of Louisiana. Moisture issues are what we're trying to solve every day. Building homes to withstand hurricanes and



tornadoes is important. But the real challenge is moisture and microbial growth.

Right now, I'm involved in a number of flood recovery and rebuilding projects, including the [Disaster Justice Network](#) in Lake Charles and [lowernine.org](http://lowernine.org) in New Orleans. We're creating training programs and resources – for builders and homeowners alike—to help these areas create durable, healthy, efficient, moisture-resistant homes, to better withstand the next weather event.

As a consultant, I'm also on all kinds of Zoom meetings with building pros, the best of the best. But most of these guys are from the Northeast and Midwest, their concern is insulating houses for heating. In the humid South, we need to focus on air sealing a house for cooling and moisture. Those are two different things. When it comes to hiring a company for a job, whether it's an engineer, architect, or builder, make sure they know your climate challenges. If you don't know, [ask me](#). I'm an educator and a connector, I can find you to the right people.

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## Wishing You a Joyful Holiday

As the end of 2020 draws near, we at [ECHOtape](#) would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your extraordinary

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kindness and support in what has been the world's most challenging year. The success of our business is based on the relationships we have built over 45 years, and we are so grateful for [your continued support](#) in the wake of [COVID-19](#).

Many years ago, we decided that in lieu of sending cards and gifts, we would donate our holiday budget to a charity geared to helping others. This is a tradition we have proudly kept going for over 25 years. We've been blessed to donate generously to The Special Olympics, The Children's Wish Foundation, Free the Children, [The One Drop Foundation](#), Plan International's "Because I Am A Girl" campaign, [Autism Speaks](#), and [Doctors Without Borders](#).

For 2020, we have once again selected the [Red Cross](#) to benefit from our donation. Every year, the Red Cross is at the scene of disasters and emergencies both at home and around the world. This year especially, the Red Cross is dedicated to supporting individuals, families and communities during the pandemic.

Founded in 1881, North America's leading emergency relief and preparedness organization offers assistance, training, and preparedness services to hundreds of millions of people each year. And **every 8 minutes** the *Red Cross* responds to some emergency, working tirelessly to deliver relief to victims of disasters and emergencies. Some of the ways in which they support communities include providing supplies, cots, blankets, and clean-up kits for vulnerable populations. They operate a call center to ensure that vulnerable individuals in

isolation have a mechanism for receiving food. They also go door-to-door to determine how isolated individuals are coping, and to ensure their immediate needs are met, which includes food and medicine supply. Learn more at [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org)

The holidays may look a little different this year, but we hope the important things remain—spending time with loved ones, sharing joy and giving back however we can. We hope that through our participation, we can make a difference.

At this time of year, we are grateful for our partnership with you. We wish you good health, happiness, and peace in a new year filled with hope.

Happy Holidays from our family to yours.

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## **Green Sun Rising Relies on ECHOtape's Cold Weather Double-Sided Tape**

How does Green Sun Rising harvest the sun's power in The Great White North? With solar panels and a little help from ECHOtape's Cold Weather Double-Sided Polyester Tape.

Alaska and Northern Canada are rich in renewable energy resources. In fact, recent estimates indicated that nearly a quarter of Alaska's energy is currently supplied by hydropower and wind energy, with a growing interest in geothermal, tidal, wave, and biofuel energies. But mention solar, and people scoff.

Just ask **Klaus Dohring**, president of [Green Sun Rising](#), an Ontario-based company that develops and supplies solar systems to generate clean electricity and heat. "Whenever I suggest using solar energy in Northern communities, the typical response is that there is too little, or no sunshine in the winter months. This is irrefutable. But so is the flip side of that argument: in the summer there is an abundance of sunshine in the far north," he told [The Circle](#). Ignoring the naysayers, Green Sun has introduced both solar photovoltaic as well as solar thermal systems into Northwest Territories applications, with great success.

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And what adhesive does he rely on to help with those installations? [DC-M194A Cold Weather Double-Sided Polyester tape](#)!

"Finding an adhesive cold weather tape that can mount aluminum profiles in frigid sub-zero temperatures (-25C to -30C) without them falling down prior to fastening them permanently was a challenge," says Dohring. That is until they found ECHOtape. "The extreme cold properties allow us to seal the aluminum profile against the metal façade at the point where

the bolt penetrates the metal.”

For more information about tape visit [The Complete Technical Guide to Adhesive Tape.](#)

To learn more about ECHOtape and how we help customers find the right tape for their job, you can read about us [here](#) or [contact us](#) with any questions you may have.

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## What We're Grateful For in 2020

If there's one thing we can take away from this year, it's that we're happier and healthier when we are grateful.

According to [Psychology Today](#), engaging in grateful thinking helps you sleep longer, be more empathetic, increase your mental toughness, and reduce toxic emotions like anger and frustration. Plus, people who regularly express gratitude are more likely to be physically fit, achieve their goals, and maintain strong friendships.

Even when our work-life balances are thrown askew, and when job security may be an illusion, being grateful for what you

still have is always beneficial.

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## ABCs of Gratitude in the Workplace

Whether you have one employee or one hundred, it's essential to express gratitude to your staff, especially now. People are battling fears about the pandemic, vaccines, and holidays, all while juggling work from home and e-learning. Stretched to the max, every employee needs to hear that their dedication is noticed and it matters. What's more, [gratitude is proven to show improvements](#) in self-esteem, achieving career goals, decision making, productivity, and resilience.

So how can you do that in your day-to-day work life? Thanks to this list from [ThriveGlobal](#), it's as easy as ABC:

**A- Acknowledgement.** Take the time to slow down and see people as human beings with feelings, values, and lives outside of the workplace. Acknowledge their milestones, contributions, and efforts with a verbal or written show of appreciation.

***"Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance."*** ~ Eckhart Tolle

**B- Behavior.** Reward positive attitudes, contributions, and interactions of those around you at every level. Being supported and acknowledged helps employees to feel valued and

“safe” in the workplace, and is the foundation for employees to share ideas and strengthen relationships. Employees that feel valued and “safe” will generally put more effort into their work, will seek out ways to best support their team and their manager, and will stay in their job longer.

**C- Consistency.** Make gratitude a habit. Whether it’s a daily text, a weekly coffee, or an afternoon Slack message, a recurring Gratitude To-Do List item will help build that gratitude muscle. Consistency is key – according to a [classic study](#), positive feedback doesn’t lose impact even when repeated often!

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## What We’re Grateful For in 2020

Gratitude may be as easy as ABC, but a **gratitude list** probably feels like the last thing you want to do in 2020. However, there are still **things to be thankful for** during this time. Here are some of ours:

**A Great Team.** Not all businesses have huge staffs, but each and every employee always has the chance to make a huge impact on your business. We know that first hand! Challenged by Covid-19, our exceptional team really rose to the occasion, keeping our business moving forward seamlessly. Even when most of our staff transitioned to work from home, they never lost sight of how to service customers, even when our supply chain was – and still is! – being challenged. They came



together to help one another adjust to new technology demands, literally overnight, never losing determination, and working like crazy to help our business survive and thrive. Those key employees who remained working on site, or have since returned to the office, embraced new safety guidelines, sticking to them religiously so that everyone can feel safe. Here we are, eight months later, with various states and provinces in various stages of shutdown and recovery, and still, our team continues to get tape to our customers while keeping the environment safe. We are so grateful and thankful for their dedication and perseverance.

**Tech Tools to Make Work Easier.** Hello, Zoom and Slack. This year has forced us to try new tools, and it's been incredible. So many tasks that can be completely automated!

**People Helping People.** Despite the bleakness on the evening news, the world is filled with good works. Retired medical professionals coming out of retirement to help sick patients. Neighbors helping elderly, at-risk, or lonely neighbors by checking in on them and bringing them food and prescriptions. People organizing car parades through neighborhoods to celebrate milestone occasions like high school graduation, birthdays, and anniversaries. Look for the good in the world, and you will find it!

**Online Connections.** More time spent online has allowed us access to so many people, influencers, and followers in different parts of the world. Whether you learned a new art technique, discovered new music or book, connected with long-

lost friends, or simply found inspiration to try something new, our online communities are something to celebrate.

**Flexibility.** Whether you work remotely, come up with your own schedule, or have time to pick up your kids from school or run an errand, this may be the biggest blessing of the year.

**Success and failure.** Chances are, your business made some progress this year, whether it be through profits or personal growth, or simply surviving the shutdown. Now is the time to celebrate success of any kind! And if, for some reason, there was a failure, take heart. Learning the lessons from a “failure” is how we grow professionally and personally and how to do it differently moving forward.

Last, but not least, on our gratitude list is that we were considered an essential business and could continue to operate with safety protocols all through the pandemic. We are grateful to serve our core customers (construction and paper mills and corrugators), while even expanding our presence in industrial manufacturing and non-wovens. We are grateful that we were able to keep most of our staff employed during such a trying time; humbled that we had the team who was willing and able to pivot quickly to make sure we could weather the storm; and eternally thankful that our customers partnered with us during such difficult times, understanding that we were all just trying to do our best.

As we continue adjusting to a new normal, take a few moments to thank the people in your life and workspace for helping make it happen. Happy Thanksgiving!

# Surviving and Thriving During COVID-19

It's no secret that COVID-19 changed our lives. As a small business, we've had to pivot in extraordinary ways. And while we can't ignore the impact isolation and swift, life-altering changes have on our psyche, we have also learned that our resiliency and ability to manage is more powerful than we thought. Here are just a few ways our [incredible team](#) has navigated the pandemic in fun and fulfilling fashion.

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## How has your day-to-day work life changed during COVID19?

***Cherie Edelstein, President:*** Although I always thought about the health and safety of our organization, my concerns now include our employee's families and home environments so that we can ensure everyone is staying as healthy as possible at all times. We need to look at our own protocols but also what happens in the home since that now affects our colleagues.

***Michael Gauthier, Senior Strategic Buyer:*** It has improved

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tremendously! Without the daily commute, my days are not as long, I'm more rested, less stressed and ultimately more productive

***Elisa Hernandez, Senior Customer Service Representative:*** Wearing "work Pajamas" ...it's a thing!

***Deborah LeCouffe, Customer Service Manager:*** Managing my team at a distance is a new concept, but we have found how to make it work well. I have to say, we are incredibly productive and efficient!

***James Begin, CTO:*** Finding solutions to issues has become easier and faster because distractions are now less frequent.

***Ilana Perlman, Human Resources Manager:*** I am still coming into the office daily, but I do miss seeing everyone's face!

***Sandra Agnessi, Accounts Payable Coordinator:*** Driving to work the streets are deserted. With most of the employees are working from home, the office is like a ghost town. It's like a *Twilight Zone* experience.

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**What's been the biggest challenge for you during this time?**

***Colby Fisher, Account Executive:*** The biggest challenge for me has been not being in the field to see customer applications. Plus, it's more difficult to really develop trustworthy relationships with existing customers and new prospects when working virtually.

**Michael Gauthier, Senior Strategic Buyer:** Cabin fever! Unable to physically interact with colleagues, friends, and, of course, family.

**David Jugan, Outside Sales Associate:** There's been a spiritual and physical health decline. We have lost a sense of worth and motivation due to both church and gym closures.

**Chantal Girard, Senior Customer Service Representative:** Grocery shopping and shopping for essentials in general. Outdoor lineups and angry people have made those normal experiences much more challenging!

**Sylvie Scrivo, Senior Customer Service Rep:** Making sure my home office was functional in every way so I can do my work as usual.

**Rosemary Mercer, Customer Service:** Remembering to wear my mask in public; it does no good in my purse!!!

**Deborah LeCouffe, Customer Service Manager:** Knowing which day of the week it is! Not quite sure why, but the days and weeks just disappear on me.

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**Has there been any silver lining for you and your family?**

**Cherie Edelstein, President:** Working from home has allowed me

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the time to think more clearly and connect with others in a very positive and supportive way.

**Mei-Lee Wang Langi, Account Executive:** My boys were sent home from college, so I get a lot more family time. We have been playing board games and having family dinners again. The boys are looking up new recipes and taking part in cooking for us.

**David Jugan, Account Executive:** We have invested in a home gym so that our entire family of 5 can get and stay fit.

**Colby Fisher, Account Executive:** My engagement!

**Kevin Quesnel, MIS Specialist:** Having the kids stay home has increased our time with them. It has made a big, positive impact and a bigger appreciation felt by all.

**Ashley Caward, Order Management Specialist:** I think we are all stronger than we think. If we can handle this, we can handle anything

**James Begin, CTO:** Not spending 2-3 hours driving each day. Not having to get up at 5:30 am and fighting traffic! Also, not going out for meals has put us back in the kitchen thus improving our cooking skills.

**Rosemary Mercer, Customer Service:** Our grandson, Edouard, was born on May 8<sup>th</sup>!

**Sandy Lee, Business Operations Analyst:** Absolutely! I love having three meals together with my family every day and enjoying the extra time we get from not having to travel to

and from work. On nice days, we get to enjoy the outdoors during lunch and breathe in the fresh air, which I rarely did at the office.

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**Have you tackled anything new and exciting? Did you finally make sourdough bread? Start training for an Ironman? Finished that craft room?**

***Colby Fisher, Account Executive:*** I've been able to get my yard and landscaping in tip-top shape, and torn down my washing machine to completely rebuild it with new parts.

***Elisa Hernandez, Senior Customer Service Representative:*** We made the beignet Micky Mouse donuts from Disneyland. Delicious and fun!

***Michael Gauthier, Senior Strategic Buyer:*** I finally taught my daughter to ride a bike. She was always too nervous. I'm now able to work out every day, without sacrificing sleep, lost 9-11lbs so far. On the downside, I help out a lot more around the house now.

***Kayla Greenberg, Senior Collection Specialist:*** I have tried every new recipe I could get my hands on and started a walking



routine each evening.

**Deborah LeCouffe, Customer Service Manager:** I confess, yes I made homemade bread a few times. Although, I probably should have been training for an Ironman.

**Nathalie Abdelhadi, Strategic Sales Support Coordinator:** Trying my hand at gardening with herbs and vegetables. So far, so good!!

**James Begin, CTO:** Due to cooking meals that would normally have 6 portions and not wanting to eat leftovers the next day, we have mastered the art of freezing meals. We have learned how to thaw and heat again so they are just as tasty as the day they were cooked!

**Steve Underhill, Senior Marketing Coordinator:** I have been able to complete several home projects, like painting, setting up our Pergola, and a new BBQ. We are slowly transforming our back yard into our vacationing spot for the summer.

**Sandy Lee, Business Operations Analyst:** I've tried new recipes, started baking a little, and incorporated 10-minute yoga stretches into my day... what a difference this makes!

**Sandra Agnessi, Accounts Payable Coordinator:** I purchased and started to read a new book series, *The Neapolitan Novels*. It's my escape, it brings me to another world and takes my mind off the things.

**Sylvie Scrivo, Senior Customer Service Rep** I finally learned to make my own pizza dough from scratch, and it's very

delicious!

***Eva Varelas, Customer Service Supervisor:*** I've started a garden for the first time.

***David Jugan, Outside Sales Associate:*** We planted our first raised bed garden this spring and are hopeful that our \$1,000 veggies will taste amazing!

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**Any funny anecdotes? For example, did your kids crash your ZOOM calls or did you start making TikTok videos??**

***Elisa Hernandez, Senior Customer Service Representative:*** The office came to my house for a socially-distant birthday and I

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had my “work” pajamas on!!

**Mei-Lee Wang Langi, Account Executive:** I have walked into a few Zoom classes because my sons point their cameras toward their doors. I drop to the floor and crawl out of view when that happens!

**Kevin Quesnel, MIS Specialist:** The kids have come up with interesting games and crafts each day. Always something fun, like the other day they set up a full live-action show in the living room. It was complete with a table of snacks, built-in audience (lots of animals), and a magic act.

**Chantal Girard, Senior Customer Service Representative:** My son tripped on the steps outside and broke my Mother’s Day present: A bottle of Champagne that he was leaving at the door for me.

**Michael Gauthier, Senior Strategic Buyer:** During a department video chat, my clothesline was in the background. Suffice to say, the meeting was “BRIEF”!

**Mauricio Acuña, Strategic Buyer:** In the beginning, I had to hide from my 2-year-old son; he would assume that daddy being home meant playtime! Three months later, not so much.

**Nathalie Abdelhadi, Strategic Sales Support Coordinator:** My dogs crash every Zoom meeting I have with my volunteer group. Thankfully my work video chats are at the office!

**Steve Underhill, Senior Marketing Coordinator:** My daughter, Taylor, moved out at the onset of the pandemic and since then

I have become her contractor and advisor of choice when it comes to just about anything except for fashion or décor. I know I am in for something new when she calls and it starts with, “Hi Daddyyyyy...”

**Sylvie Scrivo, Senior Customer Service Rep:** In one of our Friday video conference meetings, I came in costume, wearing everything I love about my favorite Caribbean island: Jamaica! The girls found it really funny.

**Rosemary Mercer, Customer Service:** We installed and filled a kiddie’s swimming pool in our garage, complete with 8 octopus spraying tentacles so our 4-year-old granddaughter could go swimming as her regular swimming classes were canceled due to COVID-19. It took three hours to install including laying cushioning on the garage floor, blowing up the pool, filling it with water, connecting the spraying tentacles, etc. She played in it for exactly 11 minutes!!! Eleven minutes of pure fun. Then we had to empty it. Not so fun.

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**As we start to resume “normal” life, what are you most looking forward to?**

**Mei-Lee Wang Langi:** Being able to hug my parents again.

**Colby Fisher:** I’m looking forward to human interaction. I’m

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looking forward to not taking other people for granted because they've always been there. Time away from people and made me realize how necessary it for us to interact on a personal level with each other.

**Michael Gauthier:** Interacting with people, visiting family, and yes, taking a Caribbean Cruise!

**Chantal Girard:** Flying to the Caribbean!

**Elisa Hernandez:** Sushi and spending time with my daughter

**Ashley Caward:** Looking forward to starting Roller Derby again.

**Ilana Perlman:** Going to the hairdresser!

**Eva Varelas:** Going out to dinner with friends and seeing my colleagues again.

**Mauricio Acuña:** Eating a good spicy pita Falafel, and babka bread!

**Cherie Edelstein:** Connecting with friends and food in a restaurant of some sort. Just chilling and hanging out without all the stresses of a virus.

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# Habitat for the Holidays

As the end of the year draws near we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for an amazing decade. The success of ECH0tape is based on the relationships we have built over 40 years, and we are so grateful and thankful for your continued support. I'm proud of what [we accomplished this year](#), and it's energizing to feel the momentum and enthusiasm our company is building in the marketplace.

What does 2020 hold for us? Well, this will come as no surprise: ECH0tape will continue to evolve as a company, and we will continue to obsess over our customers.

It is in the spirit of the holiday season that we reflect on what we are thankful for and how we can give back. Many years ago, we at ECH0tape decided that instead of sending cards or gifts, we would donate those funds to a charity geared to helping others. This is a tradition we have proudly kept for more than 25 years, donating generously to The Special Olympics, The Children's Wish Foundation, Free the Children, [The One Drop Foundation](#), [AUTISM SPEAKS](#), [Red Cross](#), and [Doctors Without Borders](#).

For 2019, we have selected [Habitat for Humanity](#) to benefit from our donation.

Habitat for Humanity partners with working, low-income families to help them build strength, stability, and independence through affordable homeownership. The impact is

immediate and the effects are lasting. Research has shown that Habitat homeowners are happier, healthier and more financially stable, which can allow them to return to school, learn a new trade or upgrade their job skills. Their children are more confident and do better in school.

Founded in Georgia in 1976, **Habitat for Humanity** supports families in Canada and the United States, and around the world. They have had a positive impact within the communities they are helping, and we believe our gift can continue to make a difference.

At this time of year, we are grateful for our partnership with you. We wish you good health, happiness, and peace in a new year filled with hope.

Happy Holidays from all of us at ECH0tape.

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## Reflections and Projections: 2019 and beyond

As we shift our focus to 2020, it's important to pause and reflect on where we've come from. 2019 was a heck of a year, filled with challenging pivots, and remarkable accomplishments. Far more ups than downs, thankfully, but I think we can all agree that business was even more

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unpredictable than usual and will likely continue into 2020.

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## Buyers Are Changing, And So Are Markets

Like many American companies, we leverage the global supply chain and, as such, we were affected by the tariffs. The uncertainty out of Washington, D.C. and subsequent trade wars, challenged our ability to adapt this past year. Thankfully, our global partners pivoted with us and we were able to navigate the changes, but it was a big lesson for small businesses like ours.

Regardless of where your politics land, changes to foreign trade practices will inevitably have ripple effects across the global supply chain. This is just the nature of a global economy. With a tumultuous election on the horizon, it's safe to assume that 2020 is going to challenge businesses even further.

That said, politics won't be the largest economic driver... culture will be. At least accordingly to Mark Penn, author of [\*Microtrends Squared: The New Small Forces Driving Today's Big Disruptions\*](#). Arguably, one of the best business books I read in 2019, Penn points out that of the 50 micro-trends identified in the book, only seven deal with politics. That ratio seems about right. The other 43 highlight trends

involving love and relationships, health and diet, technology lifestyle, and work and business.

These microtrends have the ability to really shift how business is done and who our core customers will be, so we need to pay attention. Immediately.

Take millennials for example. We've been talking about millennials for so long, few of us realize that this market is now 35-40 years old. They are business leaders and decision-makers, whether they choose to ride-share, rent garage apartments, or use co-working space rather than a traditional office. Old school businesses like ours need to pay attention or we will become irrelevant.

There are several other trends identified in the book that I believe will have a direct impact on small businesses like ours. They include:

- Women in the Workplace, or as Penn says, "Guys Left Behind." American women are outpacing men in almost all ways; they are more healthy, living longer, and more educated. Collectively, they are shattering barriers and redefining the business landscape.
- The New Factory Worker. Even though old factory jobs are disappearing, factory workers are actually more valuable than ever. Their skillset is changing, but these boots on the ground are often the key difference to socially-savvy consumers who want to invest in businesses that are powered by people.
- Droning On. Very few technologies have grown and

developed faster than the drone.

- Virtual Entrepreneurs. While entrepreneurship as a whole is in the decline in the U.S., the number of online businesses is increasing dramatically.
  - Work With Limits. Americans in the prime of their careers are choosing to work part-time. As employers, we must be open to balancing their work-life needs with our business goals.
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## Customers Are In Control

No matter how much we may want to change or affect buyer behavior, we –meaning the suppliers–are not in charge. Consumers are. Indeed, thanks to businesses like Amazon, consumers are now used to incredible levels of customer service in their personal lives that B2B must follow suit.

Indeed, customers are so much more knowledgeable and can buy products globally, the only thing that will differentiate suppliers is the customer experience.

Targeting customers with personalized messages is a big priority for our team in 2020. Customers want you to treat them as individuals and market to them accordingly. The good news is that this personal approach to customers has always been in our DNA. The hard part will be leveraging the right technology to get the job done and ensuring our staff is well equipped with all of the skills they need in an increasingly demanding business environment.

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It's no longer who markets best wins; it's the business that delivers the best customer experience who will win.

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## People Still Need Tape

Adhesive tape isn't sexy. It's not AI or VR or even smart. And yet, this "analog" product is quickly replacing fasteners and glues thanks to better engineering and science that's improving adhesive performance. We're excited about tape's new playing fields and are grateful to be on the growing side of the equation...at least for now.

Changes in our markets constantly alter the dynamics of our business, so it's important that we remain adaptable. Trends like switching plastic to paper are great because that means more paper is going to get used and we are leaders in that market. But we also recognize that consumers are trying to reduce packaging waste, so it's critical for us to keep close to our customers and pivot fast enough to meet their needs.

The good news is that we've been doing that for more than 45 years. What's another decade or two??

On a personal note, I'm grateful for the opportunity to work side-by-side with smart, passionate and fun people who are devoted to our mission. They motivate me every day to be my best, to deliver the best work experience possible to them and their families. It's an opportunity I'm thankful for every

day.

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## **What We Learned From The Marshmallow Challenge**

How does twenty sticks of spaghetti, one yard of tape, a yard of string, and a single marshmallow build a stronger team?

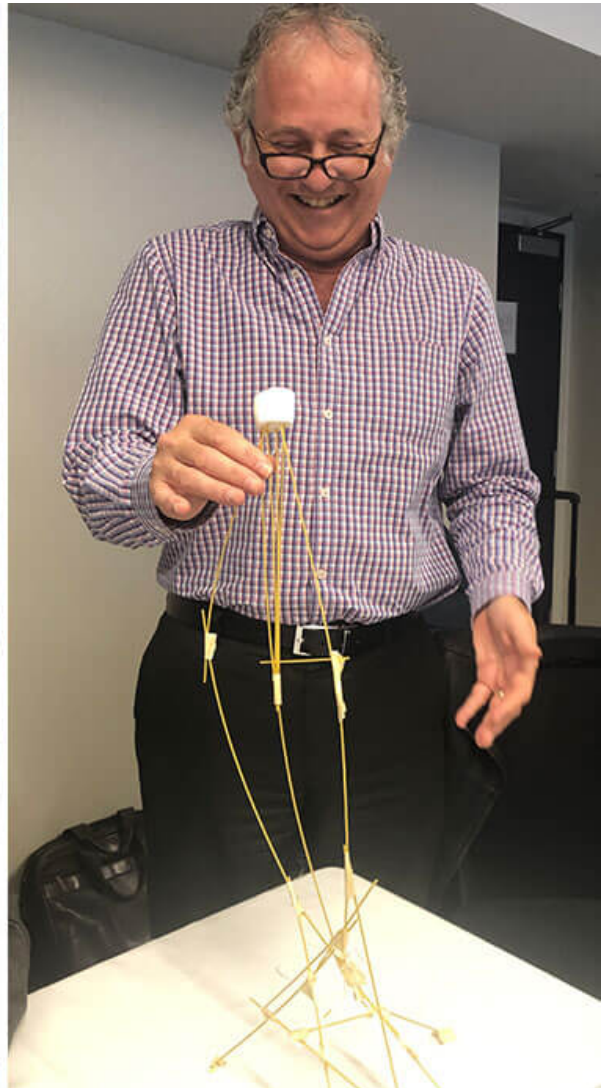
That's what we asked our management team to figure out during our last quarterly meeting.

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## What is the Marshmallow Challenge?

Every three months, the ECHOtape leadership team gathers to review our strategic objectives and initiatives. The goal, outside of accountability, is to keep the company moving forward, discuss challenges, and encourage communication. While our company is not huge, many of us work remotely so these quarterly meetings are a great way to reconnect with the

people who make ECHOtape tick every single day.

It is also a great opportunity for team building. Recently, we ended our day with a fun exercise called The Marshmallow Challenge. It ended the day on a high note – just what we all needed!

If you haven't heard, [The Marshmallow Challenge](#) has become a popular exercise in which small groups are asked to build the "tallest free-standing structure" from 20 sticks of spaghetti, 1 yard of tape, 1 yard of string, and 1 marshmallow. Each team has 18 minutes to complete the challenge, including the entire marshmallow on top. It's a fun and instructive exercise that allows teams to experience simple lessons in collaboration, innovation and creativity.

[In his TED talk "Build a tower, build a team"](#), Tom Wujec shares his findings from performing this challenge with a variety of different groups – recent business school graduates, lawyers, engineers, CEOs, and even kindergarten students. As you'll see, his observations about how the various groups approached the challenge gave rise to some surprising, and at times humorous, results:

Surprisingly, recent business school graduates are among the worst performers and kindergarteners often excel at this challenge. The children don't spend time fighting to be the leader of the group. Instead, they just start playing and in the process begin prototyping. Business school grads spend most of the time talking, planning and building, which means they don't have much time to change the design when it finally comes time to put the marshmallow on top which is usually too heavy for the structure that was built.

So... how do you think we fared??

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## What We Learned From The Marshmallow Challenge

**Always test theories through prototyping.** You think that marshmallows are light and will be easily supported, but when teams start building the structure, it suddenly tips it over. Prototyping and iterative process make for constant

improvement and eventual success. We know that after years of working with our own tape products, but putting it into practice is another thing – especially in 18 minutes. It was a great reminder!

**Working on a team is hard.** Everyone brings something to the table but it takes a while to figure what that is and how to leverage it all.

**There's no such thing as perfect.** You do not always get it right the first time, or even the second. The key is to keep trying!

**Use what is available.** In business and in this challenge, there is never unlimited resources or the perfect environment to grow.

**Playing with spaghetti and marshmallows is fun.**

As Wujec says, every project has its own marshmallow. I have been on many projects where you get to the end and all of a sudden there is that oh-no moment. It's a great reminder not to assume outcomes, and not to put all your eggs in one basket.

If you're looking for a fun way to kick start a meeting or get a team into a creative frame of mind, try running a marshmallow challenge of your own. Is your team up to it?

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# **ECHOtape      CEO      Marilyn Edelstein Talks Tape**



For more than 40 years, ECHOtape has helped companies match their specific application needs with the right tape. Serving industries across North America including manufacturing, building and construction, paper mills and paper converters, the company focuses exclusively on pressure sensitive tape by bringing performance and value-wise solutions to our



customers. And we've been doing it as a small, family-owned and operated business since 1973 when Stanley Edelstein sold his very first roll of tape.

Today, it's the company's matriarch, CEO Marilyn Edelstein, who oversees the company along with her two daughters, Cherie and Risa, ensuring Stanley's vision and legacy thrives deep into the 21st Century.

Recently, we sat down with Marilyn for a candid conversation about life, legacy and the tape that holds it all together.

**What made Stanley Edelstein decide to start a tape company? Who or what inspired the business?** Stanley served four years in the U.S. Army, including time spent in Korea in the 1950s. Upon his return home, to Brooklyn, he went to work with a company who distributed pressure-sensitive tape, the correct name for the assortment of tapes we carry today. A competitor offered him a position in the same field, but it required a move to Chicago, which is where we made our first home right after we got married. Our first two children were born there!

After a few ups and downs in Chicago, and a stint in Cleveland, Stanley decided that it was time to move to my hometown and birthplace, Montreal. Everyone thought we were crazy. Even my family tried to discourage us from moving there because the French language issue was driving young people out of the province. But Stanley took that as a challenge, and never looked back.

Determined to make it work, we moved into my mother's home –

with 3 children now! – and with my full support, Stanley went into business for himself. We worked from home, and really had little expenses other than food and clothing, so the risk seemed minimal. Truth be told, once the excitement of tape gets into your blood, it never leaves.

**What was the very first ECHOtape product?** To the best of my knowledge, it was a Polypropylene tape, or basic packaging tape as we know it today. Already well-known in Europe, it was just coming to market in North America as a replacement for gum tape. Stanley and I both felt strongly that we needed to stay ahead of upcoming markets, so we used our savings to attend the largest trade show in the world. We were probably one of the first to introduce polypro to the marketplace.

**Tell me a few interesting facts about those first 5 years.** As I mentioned earlier, we felt strongly that trade shows were a necessity, but funds were limited. So Stanley would attend those shows he would have access to by bus. He would take a night bus to his destination, visit the show the day of arrival, and catch the evening bus home.

Stanley was an outstanding sales person, but a poor organizer. So each evening after the children were asleep, we would sit together, go over each call he had made that day, and discuss when he wanted to see that client again. I would create his schedule by dividing the week into 5 territories and fit that client into the appropriate slot.

Our first employee was a college student who came to the house each evening with his Irish Setter dog in a tiny Volkswagen.

He would fill his car with the orders that were not in abundance and deliver them the next day.

At one point, Stanley experienced a severe back problem and was confined to bed for six weeks. Still, that didn't stop us. He hired one or two sales people at the time, conducting the interviews from his bed. Not customary, true, but we did what we needed to do to survive!

**Does the name ECHOtape mean anything? Where did it come from?** Actually, the name was created by an agency at the end of the 90s. I remember that we saw it as an "echo" that would reverberate, as an echo would, over the mountains and lakes and out into the world. Hence, ECHOtape.

**Who were the first customers? Who supported the business during the early years?** Stanley took a personal interest in all his customers; "It's the American way," he would say. He never learned the French language, but his approach was novel in the interest and time he gave directly to his clients. Whenever I would ask him how he made the sale to a person who could not speak English he would tell me that it didn't matter. The product was the language, and he always left with a genuine smile and a firm handshake that spoke volumes. He had many French clients.

**Forty years is a long time to be in business. What do you remember most about the company's growth or change during those decades?** In the 70s, it was all about trade shows and meeting people and getting to know the ins and outs of each customers. These were personal relationships that Stanley

built one person at a time.

By the 1980s, we did have other salespeople, but Stanley understood that personal relationships was name of the game. As a company, we showed a great deal of compassion to those in trouble, offering to help with extended payment terms or even working in the factory with our clients to help them keep producing. We had respect for each customer and they returned it.

The '90s was more of the same, but this was a growth decade for the company. We hired a lot of staff, and expanded our operations. During this time, we never lost our humility. We worked side-by-side with our employees, extending to them the same courtesies we gave to our customers. This philosophy resonated with them as well as our suppliers, who continued to invest in us, even when there were other options.

The last ten years have been both the most trying and the most successful. Losing Stanley ... that's not something any of us will get over. But his legacy lives on; he still receives accolades from those who remember him, both personally and professionally. I know our manufacturing and distribution has grown tenfold, but to me, it's all about family. Our staff always knew the importance we placed on putting families first before anything else. We still share the good and bad with each other. And to this day, we've never lost our humility.

**What was the single biggest stumbling block to growth?** Finding the right people to help us grow.

**How has the business evolved?** From distributing any “me too” products to supplying niche and specialty markets. This is where we really shine. [We continue to thrive by tackling adhesive challenges that other companies won’t address.](#) Even if that means developing a niche product. Stanley always loved getting his hands dirty, and I like to think that we still do to this day.

**What does the next 40 years look like?** Steady growth, and a healthy company that never lays off staff because the computer world has replaced the human factor. Our people are our greatest asset.

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## Cardboard Out of the Box

Here’s an idea that’s out of the box, literally: Cardboard furniture.

No. You’re not in the wrong place. This is still [ECHOtape](#). But we love corrugated cardboard because so many of our customers make it. As we work to expand our line of [splicing tapes](#) (an important part of the corrugate cardboard process!), our research has uncovered some incredible creations that are worth sharing:



My obsession with cardboard started with the [Wiggle chair](#), shown above. A previous boss, in life before ECHOtape, had one in her office and I fell in love with it! More recently, I stumbled upon this [gorgeous corrugate bench via Etsy](#). And then Lexus UK created [this drivable electric car made of cardboard](#). (Note: It's drivable only in a highly controlled environment because the wheels are also made of cardboard.) Taking three months to build, this car is constructed of 1,700 precision-cut pieces of cardboard, which were hand adhered together with water-based glue. The motor is mounted on an aluminum-and-steel frame. ([Watch the video](#))



Waterproof cardboard? Well, mostly! Check out this Bill Wagner photo from the [9th Annual Cardboard Boat Regatta](#) held last July at Lake Sacajawea.

With 3D printing revolutionizing the way we think and create products, there's no telling what will be next in the cardboard landscape. Do you have an innovative cardboard project that could use a specialty splicing tape? [Tell us about it.](#) We love solving tape challenges!