

column

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Paul Allen started Infobases, MyFamily.com, and 10x Marketing. He currently runs business incubator Provo Labs. He has taught at UVSC and BYU and he blogs at www.infobaseventures.com/blog.



As I approached my first mid-life crisis last year (turning 40), I decided that some long distance running would do me good.

I figured that by running farther or faster than I had ever run before, I could prove to myself in the immortal words of Monty Python, "I'm not dead yet." Kind of a mind-over-matter thing.

So I started running regularly on a treadmill at Gold's Gym. I love running on a treadmill, listening to my iPod, and carefully watching my time, speed and calories burned, like a good sports statistician.

Occasionally I break out into a little Taylor Hicks-like dance move when "In the Stone" by Earth, Wind and Fire or "Two Princes" by Spin Doctors starts playing. I just can't resist.

People, including my wife, make fun of me for running at the gym. I got up at 3:30 a.m. on my 40th birthday and ran a half marathon (my first ever) on a

entrepreneurs who work out together

treadmill. People laugh at me for it, but it was a great experience.

I run outside sometimes too, but I honestly prefer running and working out at a gym. Here's why: Humans are very social creatures. We get energy and take cues from other humans.

I can't tell you how many times I have been in the middle of a run, just about ready to give up on my goal for the day, only to glance over and see someone chugging away on a treadmill; a man or woman of any age, shape or size, and I see that they have run more miles than I have. I say to myself, "If they can do it, so can I."

I may see an older man lifting weights, or an aerobics class in full swing, and the very thought of someone else's effort and determination fires me up and helps me keep going. Other people at the gym can help me so that I don't give up and go home.

So what do entrepreneurs do when business life gets tough and they feel like quitting?

Where is the "gym" that gives entrepreneurs a chance to get fired up by hanging out with other entrepreneurs?

I'm seeing more and more entrepreneurial hangouts being created, and I think it bodes well for Utah's economy.

Alan Hall of MarketStar has opened up two E Stations, one in Ogden and the other on the Davis Applied Technology Center campus. These are outstanding facilities for startup companies.

The Larry H. Miller Business Innovation Center houses several startup companies. There are regular training meetings and networking events.

In Provo, we have recently opened the Provo Labs Academy for Entrepreneurs. In our first month, we signed up

more than 30 entrepreneurs. We do daily training meetings and brainstorming meetings.

On Fridays we discuss the newest Internet marketing opportunities so that our entrepreneurs can take advantage of them before the rest of the world does. For example, Amazon's launch of its own pay-per-click search engine; Google's Web site optimizer program; Microsoft accepting virtual bill boards on its Virtual Earth service; Yahoo testing pay-per-call on its new mobile phone search engine; and the launch of Turn.com's new CPA network backed by \$18 million of venture funding.

Our goal is to motivate all of the entrepreneurs to experiment, measure and test new and old online marketing concepts, and share the results with the rest of the Academy members.

Most entrepreneurs work alone. Most don't have any workout buddies. When things get tough, and they always do, where do entrepreneurs turn for help?

Where can they quickly learn what works and what doesn't in 21st century marketing? This is something they weren't likely to learn in business school. Since it is constantly changing, they need ongoing education. They need a real-time sharing atmosphere so that they can learn from the successes and failures of others.

I think entrepreneurs who "work out" with other entrepreneurs are more likely to succeed more quickly than those who go it alone.

I know it is helping me already, like being at the gym. I get energy every day by watching and working with other entrepreneurs who are determined to succeed. We all reinforce each other's feeling that, "If he/she can do it, so can I."

That is often all the motivation you need. 