

For Immediate Release

ENTREPRENEUR LEVERAGES SILICON VALLEY EXPERIENCE IN WRITING BEST-SELLING THRILLERS

KEITH RAFFEL APPLIES SIX RULES FOR START-UPS TO NEW CAREER AS AUTHOR

PALO ALTO, CA – OCTOBER 22, 2009 – Silicon Valley entrepreneur Keith Raffel has applied six tenets he followed in founding a successful Silicon Valley start-up company to his current career as a best-selling author.

Raffel's second novel, *Smasher: A Silicon Valley Thriller*, is out this month. It tells the story of a technology entrepreneur who is battling a ruthless Silicon Valley billionaire for control of his company. When his wife is run down by a car, the stakes are raised: he is forced to use his brains and business acumen as he races to find her attacker.

Prior to becoming a novelist, Raffel spent over twenty years working for high-tech companies in Silicon Valley. His career culminated in the founding of UpShot Corporation, the pioneer in cloud-computing whose example Salesforce.com and other companies emulated. UpShot was ultimately acquired by Siebel Systems and is now a core part of Oracle Corporation's cloud computing strategy.

Raffel sums up the six shared rules for success in starting companies and writing novels as:

1. Sell your story
2. Find a niche
3. Build a team
4. Implement a product plan
5. Build a brand
6. Talk to customers

Sell your story: Raffel says he was struck by the similarities between obtaining venture capital to back his company and finding a publisher for his first book. "In both cases," he explains, "a compelling, gripping story is the starting point. In one case the deliverable is called a business plan that you try to convince a venture capitalist firm to invest in. In the other, it's called a manuscript that you try to convince a publisher to print and distribute."

Find a niche: A successful company starts with a distinctive product whose value is instantly recognizable. According to Raffel, it's the same with a novel. "So much of today's crime fiction is still set in New York or Los Angeles," he says. "People are interested in learning how Silicon Valley works, but almost no writers set their thrillers and mysteries here despite the ambition, greed, and money that abound."

Build a team: While a manuscript is written by one person, support from a team of advisors and experts can be the difference between success and failure for an author. "I turn to advisors," Raffel acknowledges, "to gain the specialized expertise that enhances my books' plot and background. After finishing a manuscript, a cadre of friends who are terrific literary critics provide feedback. They're like beta testers in the high-tech world. For example, when

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I heard from a couple of them that the book started a little slow, I rejiggered the story to move more action up front.”

Then Raffel cites the team of experts whom he relies on to launch his books into the marketplace: “My agent, whose job it is to find a publisher and negotiate contracts, is head of sales. A bunch of terrific writers like Steve Berry, M.J. Rose, Marcus Sakey, and Cara Black have been telling the world to read my books. What they’re providing then is trusted customer testimonials.”

Implement a product plan: Building a successful company requires a carefully defined product and execution plan. The same applies to an author. “I use project management software to keep my books on schedule“ Raffel says. “Of course, the writing process is not mechanical. Inspiration and creativity are vital, and you can’t force them. But you need to maintain a level of discipline to keep the process moving. In both starting a company and writing a book, creativity needs to be marshaled and executed according to a plan. Inspiration and creativity without planning and discipline means no product.”

Build a brand: From its first product release, UpShot stood for ease-of-use and affordability. “Our development team knew to build with those two goals in mind,” Raffel recalls, “and customers knew what kind of product they would get from us. In a similar way, I’m trying to provide readers with a compelling story that features an everyday person confronted with life-or-death peril and at the same time is infused with the gestalt of Silicon Valley.”

Talk to customers: Raffel has over 30 appearances and signings scheduled before year-end. “What I loved best in high tech was meeting with customers and seeing what they thought of our products. It was both validation of what we’d done and inspiration for what we’d do next,” Raffel said. “No different with novel-writing. Listening to what readers like – and even what they don’t – provides inspiration and impetus for the next book.”

Raffel has deep roots in the Silicon Valley. His father was an engineer at Ampex Corporation in Redwood City who worked on the first videotape recorders half a century ago. Raffel’s own eclectic background includes a position with top secret clearance as counsel to the Senate Intelligence Committee overseeing the CIA. He worked at a variety of pioneering Silicon Valley companies prior to founding UpShot in 1997. UpShot was acquired by Siebel Systems in 2003. While he serves as a board member and advisor in Silicon Valley, his primary focus since leaving Oracle in 2007 has been writing mysteries and thrillers. His first novel, the best-selling *Dot Dead*, was deemed “[W]ithout question the most impressive mystery debut of the year” by Bookreporter.com.

See Raffel’s full tour schedule and press kit at www.keithraffel.com.

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For Additional Information Contact:

[Abigail Johnson](mailto:Abigail.Johnson@roeder-johnson.com)

Roeder-Johnson Corporation

(650) 802-1850

<http://email.roeder-johnson.com>