

# **Michael Hess**

**CEO/Founder at Skooba Design**

Rochester, New York Area, NY, US

Founder/CEO Skooba Design, CBS/Business Writer, Speaker

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## **Biography**

Over 20 years' experience in product development, sales and marketing, entrepreneurship and executive management. Family's well-known photo equipment manufacturing business, The Saunders Group, purchased a major branded camera bag company in 1990. Through 1994, focused on managing all facets of the company's bag business, designing new products and lines, managing its in-house sewing factory and establishing its overseas sourcing and manufacturing base. Grew the division by more than 300% over that 4-year period. After 1994, served as Vice President of the parent company and its 15 branded product lines. Family sold the 50 year-old business which had grown from 5 to 100 employees in 1998. After aiding in the transition of the family business to new ownership, left at the end of 1999 to start RoadWired, the carrying case company which later became Skooba Design. Also started travel product retailer Journeyware (sold business to a major luggage company) and most recent launch, Hotdog Yoga Gear. Public speaker, advisor/mentor to other entrepreneurs and small business owners. Author of twice-weekly small business column for CBS News, and "expert" advisor on focus.com business information site. Interviewed numerous times on television and radio, in publications and online media. B.A. in Political Science, and graduate of the intensive Textile Executive Management program at the industry-leading Philadelphia College of Textiles. Traveled extensively, developing close, long-standing relationships with factories and customers in over twenty countries. Specialties: over 20 years' experience in design, sourcing and manufacturing, both domestically and offshore, with particular focus and expertise in sewn goods. Expertise in small business marketing, PR and other creative functions, as well as international business. [www.businesswithclass.com](http://www.businesswithclass.com) / [www.michaeljhess.com](http://www.michaeljhess.com)

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## **Availability**

Keynote, Panelist, Workshop, Host/MC, Author Appearance, Corporate Training

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## **Industry Expertise**

Design, Textiles/Leather Goods, Advertising/Marketing, Writing and Editing, Public Relations and Communications, Consumer Goods, Outsourcing/Offshoring, Management Consulting

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## **Areas of Expertise**

Entrepreneurship, Product/Brand Development, Creative Marketing, Public Relations, Customer Service, International Business, Startups, Sourcing, Communications, Business With Class (Tm)

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## **Affiliations**

CBS News "Business With Class" Columnist, StellaService "Elite" Customer Service Award-Winner

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## **Sample Talks**

### **Big PR on a Small Budget**

How a small business can get big business exposure on the stringiest of shoestrings (my own business has been in every significant publication, TV news, major websites, etc., and we've never used an agency or spent a fortune). A "step by step" process, from building a press list to writing effective news releases, press distribution, how to work well with writers, editors and bloggers, and follow up. Perfect for those starting and running small companies.

### **Customer Service**

My absolute business passion - making people happy - what to do, what not to do, common mistakes, etc. What great companies do and what horrible companies do. My company has been independently rated as an "Elite" customer service organization (fewer than 5% of thousands of companies tested earn this highest designation), so this is something I live and breathe.

### **Entrepreneurship**

Starting and running a small business on a true small business budget, creative solutions, low cost resources, tools and techniques for just about everything, realities and common pitfalls of money for real-world small business owners.

### **International Business for Small Business People**

Navigating the business and cultural issues of working with people overseas, sourcing products, etc. (based on my 20 years of traveling and working with people in probably 20 or 25 countries).

### **Quality Communication**

Upping your personal presentation skills in a world of declining standards? how to be "that much" better in written and live communication, whether starting a career, growing a career, running a business, etc.

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## **Event Appearances**

### **Creativity Vs. Commerce (Keynote Address)**

Creativity in Motion (Career Day)

### **Big PR on a Small Budget**

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## **Education**

State University of New York at Buffalo

BA Political Science

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## Accomplishments

### Winner, Internet Retailer "Hot 100"

Company website named one to the prestigious annual list of 100 hottest global sites

### Winner, StellaService "Elite" designation

StellaService is an independent customer service testing firm that rates and monitors thousands of online businesses. After over 300 blind tests, my business was given the highest "Elite" designation, issued to fewer than 5% of companies tested

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## Testimonials

See

[www.michaeljhess.com/references](http://www.michaeljhess.com/references)

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