

GRAND CIRCLE CORPORATION

ALAN E. LEWIS

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Chairman, Grand Circle Corporation
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Alan Lewis is owner and chairman of Grand Circle Corporation and co-author of *Driving With No Brakes: How a bunch of hooligans built the best travel company in the world* (September, 2010).

In 1985, Alan and his wife acquired Grand Circle Travel for \$9 million. At the time, the company generated \$27 million in sales from one office— and was losing \$2 million a year. Under Alan's leadership over the last twenty-five years, Grand Circle has grown into a highly profitable international travel company with annual sales in excess of \$600 million. The company owns or charters 60 ships and employs 2,300 associates in 30 plus offices worldwide. Each year, Grand Circle and its affiliate, Overseas Adventure Travel, are responsible for taking more than 119,000 American travelers to 100 countries around the world. Despite an uncertain economy, the rise of the online travel industry, and more than 300 crises that shuttered the doors of many major competitors, Alan keeps the company flourishing: it has been growing at a rate of nearly 20 percent per year for the last two decades.

As Alan reveals in his book *Driving With No Brakes*, Grand Circle survived and thrived all of these tumultuous years due to his integration of six core values and philanthropic mission into the company's business strategy. Such values, which include risk taking, open and courageous communication, and thriving in change, have made the company fast, flexible and easily adaptable when faced with regional and world crises – including 9/11, SARS and the recent volcanic eruption in Iceland – and spurred the development of a team of strong, skillful and committed leaders. Alan's commitment to incorporating philanthropy into the company's core business strategy led to the establishment of Grand Circle Foundation, which supports communities in which Grand Circle works and travels, and through which the organization has donated or pledged more than \$50 million to educational, humanitarian and cultural endeavors worldwide, including support to more than 100 schools in 60 villages.

Alan has received several awards for innovation in philanthropy, business and the workplace, among them the late Paul Newman's Committee to Encourage Corporate Philanthropy for philanthropic innovation and leadership and Ernst & Young's New England Social Entrepreneur of the Year. The company receives annual recognitions by readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* and *Travel + Leisure* and has been named one of the top 25 best medium-sized companies to work for in the U.S. for by *HR Magazine* and the Best Places to Work Institute.

In *Driving with No Brakes*, co-authored with Harriet, Alan offers a brutally honest reflection on Grand Circle's successes and failures, and highlights important business choices and strategies that have propelled it to become one of the world's leading travel companies. The

book offers a case for how leaders within any industry can make their businesses more profitable and more generous.