



TAKING A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

It's easy to imagine Yanik Silver's recruitment ad for his new travel enterprise – "Wanted: Entrepreneurs with an adventure streak to share ideas and the occasional adrenalin rush."

Silver, a Maryland-based Internet entrepreneur who has made a small fortune with his web-based businesses, is taking that successful model and melding it with his passion for high-octane travel to create Maverick Business Adventures. The name, really, says it all.

"For me, maverick stands for someone who is unconventional, someone who is a renegade, or doesn't follow the rules and gets things done on their own terms," says the 34-year-old Silver. "It's someone who, when they tell their families or friends about these adventures, are told they're crazy. That's part of it. I'm looking for the crazy people."

In short, people just like Silver. After all, there's a common element shared by adventure junkies and entrepreneurs, and that's the willingness to take risks. Silver, a father of two, has an ambitious "To Do" list that most couch potatoes might consider "crazy," including climbing Mount Everest, scuba diving the Great Barrier Reef near Australia, swimming with the Great White sharks off the coast of South Africa, and flying a MiG fighter jet to the stratosphere (the complete list can be seen on Silver's InternetLifestyle.com site). Given his lofty accomplishments – he's already run with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain, raced across the Baja Desert, rafted the surging whitewater of the Gauley River in West Virginia, and has signed up for Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic space flight – the smart money says Silver will complete his checklist with time to spare. His personal resume highlights Silver's adherence to one guiding principal: "You can't control the way you die; you can only control the way you live."

Now he's looking for company. "Entrepreneurs are loners in a way," says Silver. "It's like a club we all belong to, and when you meet another entrepreneur who's been a successful business, there's always something in common, no matter what their age group, or what business they're in. We can all relate to one another."

Entrepreneurs, says Silver, share the trait of taking an idea and transforming it into a reality through effort, resiliency, and faith. Maverick Business Adventures is a natural extension of that notion for Silver, combining his two greatest passions – teaching entrepreneurship and adventure travel.

"It's really bringing together a group of people who are like-minded and share the same principals, and want to experience life to the fullest," he says.

The Maverick Business Adventures concept, says Silver, is based on the country club model. Prospective members apply to join the club, paying an initial entry fee after being accepted. Silver's target audience consists of (but isn't limited to) entrepreneurs in the age range of 25 to 60 years old who are the owners or CEOs of companies generating anywhere from \$1 million to \$35 million annually. Once accepted, members can choose from a number of trips offered by MBA to suit their own comfort level.

"Every single trip, I want to make a once-in-a-lifetime experience, something the members couldn't do on their own," he says. "Each trip will offer some sort of access, an element of something special, that they couldn't get if they simply booked with an outfitter."

For example, the inaugural trip to Baja in late January aboard high-end dune buggies, which is being coordinated by the outfitter Wide Open Baja, includes detours to the coastal village of San Ignacio (in the hopes of up-close encounters with Pacific gray whales) and the remote water-sports mecca of Scorpion Bay.

The added bonus of Maverick Business Adventures, Silver says, is the "formal business part" of each trip, in which members have the unique opportunity to rub elbows with other successful entrepreneurs in a casual but intimate setting (most trips will be capped at fewer than 35 participants). Like Silver's successful mastermind groups, MBA members will sign a confidentiality agreement, allowing for a free and open exchange of ideas.

"They've found the more they share, the more they get back, and the better the quality of information they get," he says. "The kinds of connections that we could form from these types of trips could be incredible."

Trips will also include at least a half-day presentation by a celebrity speaker, and each participant, given their backgrounds as successful entrepreneurs, will be required to present a 15-30 minute workshop on "something that's working in their business," says Silver. Those informal seminars will be used that launching pads to discuss other topics. Eventually, Silver would like to see MBA go global, with satellite offices all over the world. The web site (www.maverickbusinessadventures.com) would be the glue to hold everything together, providing members a forum to continually share ideas and network.

"We're going to design the site as a place where people can not only interact, but also get help from each other," he says. "It will be a place where they can talk about what skills they have, what they need help on, what can they contribute."

Finally, Silver hopes to help others outside this exclusive club. He has always earmarked five percent of his online-generated profits for charity, and Maverick Business Adventures will also provide members a chance to assist the charities of their choice. For the Baja trip, Silver will offer spots on one leg of the adventure to underprivileged youth interested in becoming entrepreneurs themselves. "So there's also the element of giving back, which is important," he says with trademark conviction.