Nicholas Aretakis spent 22 successful years in the semiconductor business, helping increase profits tenfold in the ’90s at ESS Technology, one of the first to introduce an audio chip for PC motherboards. He also led lucrative IPOs at two other semiconductor companies.

Seems he learned more than engineering at Columbia as a transfer student more than 25 years ago.

Although he credits the competitiveness of his fellow students and the talent and dedication of his professors for the quality of his education, several experiences outside the classroom—including a brush with death, an arduous summer job, and playing on the rugby team—were key elements that forged his character and leadership abilities that helped him become a success as an entrepreneur and book author.

As a rugby player, he picked up some valuable entrepreneurial skills collaborating on a fundraising idea to cover international travel expenses.

“I contacted an alumnus at Columbia Pictures, and instead of money, I asked him if he could loan us a few recent movies so we could conduct a fundraiser on campus,” he says. “We raised enough to send everyone overseas.”

By the time he was 30 years old, Aretakis had become a millionaire and later helped develop landmark technologies in computer sound and advanced DSL capabilities.

His professional background includes 24 years in sales, marketing, and operations leadership in Silicon Valley, and two successful high-tech IPOs. Aretakis is also heavily involved leading Arkayne, a company he started several years ago with the intention of changing the way businesses can run online marketing campaigns. The company’s product is a related-posts plugin, initially designed for blogs with some additional features allowing networking and building links. The tool examines the content on a blog or any Web page and compares every post to other content to create a list of related links within the user’s collection of trusted friends and partner sites.

Aretakis intends to see Arkayne repeat his past successes.