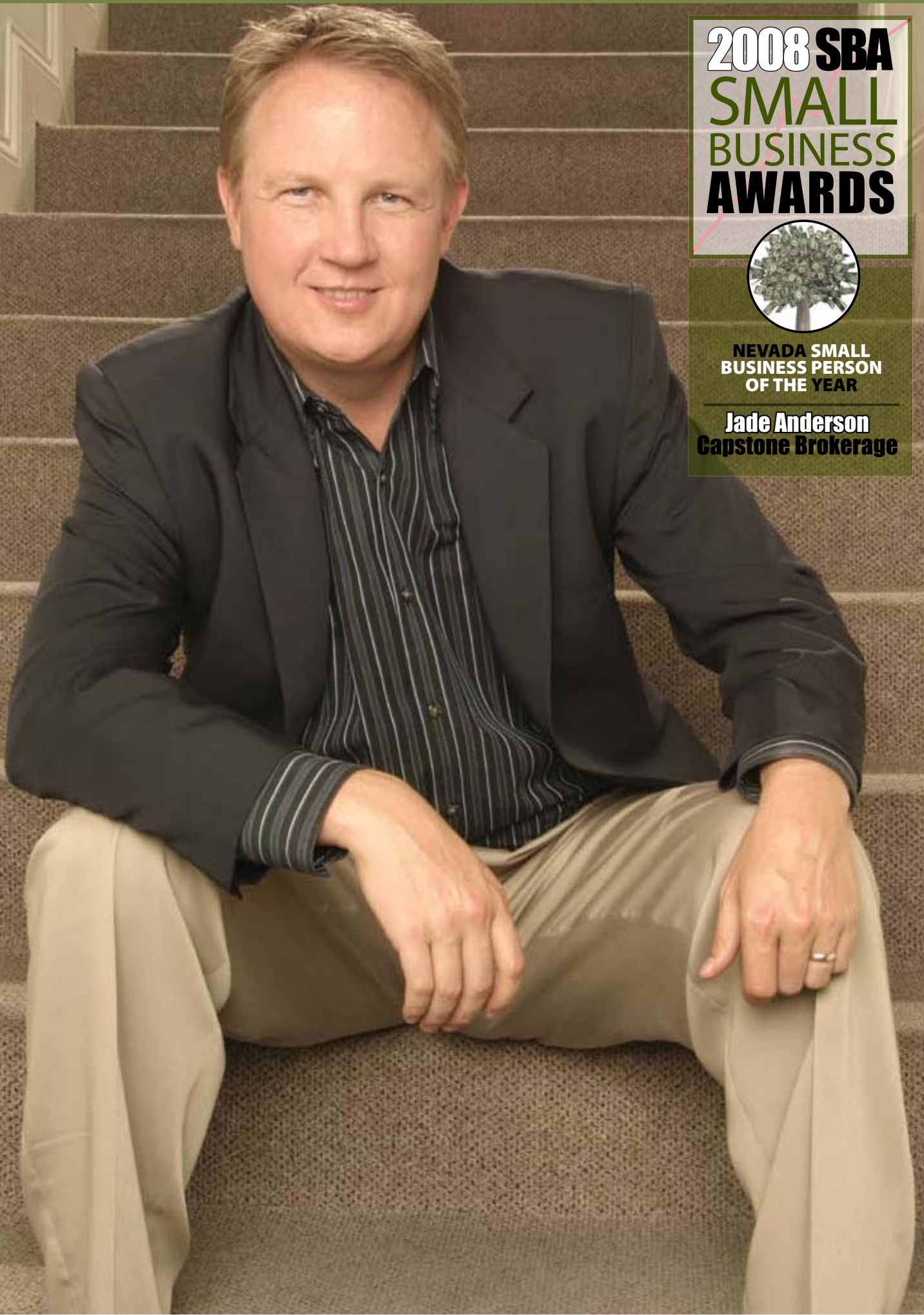


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OF THE YEAR**

**Jade Anderson
Capstone Brokerage**



Capstone CEO stresses education

By Brian Sodoma

Special Publications writer

Jade Anderson is a lifelong learner. In the tough insurance brokerage industry, Anderson, CEO of Capstone Brokerage Inc., knows he's only as good as his employees and admits he wants to learn as much as he can about being a successful leader so he can keep his company growing. "You have to get the right people on the bus, then figure out where they're going to sit," he said.

For Anderson, his company is his classroom laboratory. He tinkers to make sure his "workplace culture," a phrase he uses frequently, is in line with his company vision and allows his employees to prosper and succeed. "Is it right for the client, the company? Is it something you're willing to take responsibility for? Then let's do it," says the quietly confident CEO about his approach to empowering employees.

Empowering employees has helped Anderson succeed. He started Capstone in 1997 after graduating from UNLV with a degree in business administration. After running Capstone as a part-time venture for about five years, he shifted gears in 2002, deciding to put all of his energy into growing it into the company it is today. Since 2003, Capstone has increased revenues by 700 percent and now employs 25 people. Anderson's company also serves as a connection to other successful entrepreneurs and business minds around the globe, a connection that has brought him many unique and helpful insights into the way to run a thriving business.

Anderson is a member of the Las Vegas chapter of the Entrepreneurs Organization (EO). Through EO, he has been able to apply to MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)'s entrepreneurs masters program where he meets annually for one week with other CEOs and entrepreneurs like him and listens to business leaders and professors speak on issues related to running their own business. He, along with his 60 fellow program enrollees, are allowed to ask questions and seek further counsel from these experts. "It's been a three-year journey of intense business learning. It's been a lot of work and a lot of fun. I have relationships from every part of the world. I can talk to one of the largest cookie manufacturers in Malaysia. A Colombian entrepreneur can give me insight into what it's like running a company in a Third World country run by drug lords and gorilla groups. It's truly a one-of-a-kind experience."

As practical as the advice is, sometimes he admits it doesn't work the best when applied to his own business. But that doesn't keep him from trying it out. "I take stuff I've learned from this experience and try to implement it into my company. Some things work, some things don't. Sometimes, you have to modify it for your situation. Business is kind of like a big experiment," Anderson added.

Being involved in MIT's masters program as

well as EO helps Anderson connect to people who are also dealing with the challenges of growing a company. "It can be really overwhelming and it's nice to talk to people with the same challenges," he said.

One of the most useful pieces of advice he received through his educational experiences in the past few years came from author and business consultant, Michael Gerber, who stated that it's important for business owners to work "on" the business not "for" it. One example of this approach is in the simple decision not to handle any clients himself. "I don't manage my own book of business. It comes in the door and I hand it to others," he said. "It keeps employees from feeling like they're in competition with you."

Handing over responsibilities to employees speaks to the level of trust he has in his staff, which he refers to as a group of "thinkers" capable of making their own decisions for the company's

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greater good. "There's an open communication channel between the executives and employees. I don't want to be a roadblock in my business. This business is not about me. I built this company to be about the company so that if you remove me it can still work well," he added. "Most successful companies outgrow their founder."

Despite a tough economy and limited access to expansion capital, Anderson still eyes expansion into Arizona and California and hopes for a five-state operation someday. He likely sees his expansion into other states being done through acquisition rather than starting a new Capstone branch. "I've grown it from the ground up and I don't want to do it that way again," he said with a laugh, referring the days he started his company, living on a friend's couch and maxing out credit cards to keep the business afloat.

Anderson is not above delegating duties and even sees himself as being quite expendable. "Check your ego at the door. There's no room for it here. There are times when I have to ask myself 'is my skill set sufficient for running this company, or can someone else do it better?'"

Today, Anderson is focused on making sure operations are smooth, and employees are happy. His company has gone paperless and tirelessly looks for ways to add new technology.

He is also committed to making sure his company gives back to the community. About a third of his time is spent with Olive Crest, a nonprofit that supports the prevention and treatment of child abuse. Anderson serves on the board of directors and helps lead fundraising and volunteer efforts. As in his business, Anderson said he is learning to delegate some of his responsibilities with the nonprofit.

Ironically, Anderson says his greatest challenge is not really on the business side of his life. As a father of two with another child on the way,



learning about business has triggered a desire to pass along what he's learned to his children as well as other entrepreneurs. "One of my passions is definitely mentoring," he said. But he openly admits mentoring his children brings challenges. "I would have to say my biggest challenge is passing along the values I've learned," he said. "You can't just hand money to your children."