

## In The News

San Francisco Business Times

An Entrepreneur Profile on Groove president Sean Dunn

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# Entrepreneur Profile: SEAN DUNN



**RÉSUMÉ**  
**Name:** Sean Dunn.  
**Title:** President.  
**Company:** Groove Eleven, a creative agency that focuses on brand positioning, product launch and marketing.  
**HQ:** San Rafael.  
**2005 revenue:** \$3.1 million.  
**Number of employees:** 15 full-time, 22 contractors.  
**Year founded:** 2002.  
**Source of startup capital:** Invested personal income and bought-out preferred vendor relationships.  
**Background:** Grew up in Philadelphia. Received a bachelor's degree from Temple University and an M.F.A. from San Diego State University. In the film industry for 10 years in Los Angeles. Moved to the Bay Area in 1997 to get into interactive design work.  
**Age:** 43.  
**Residence:** San Rafael.  
**Web site:** [www.groove11.com](http://www.groove11.com)

## BIG PICTURE

**Reason for starting business:** Because we felt like there was a hole in the market. People hired individual silos of expertise (in the branding, events, advertising and marketing industries). Basically, once the technology caught up, we were all using the same tools and it didn't make sense. We want to own the whole relationship.

**Most difficult part of decision:** We were clearly telling a story that people had not heard and the difficult part was getting traction.

**Biggest plus of ownership:** To create something. If we are going to help people build their brands we had to build ours first ... that's the coolest part.

**Biggest drawback:** The building of the infrastructure around the passion that we do. I don't get to be a brand strategist everyday.

**Biggest misconception:** That you get to set your own agenda.

**Biggest business strength:** Our creative energy and the people that we've brought in.

**Biggest business weakness:** Angel funding or the lack thereof.

**Biggest risk:** When you have people who are depending on you, you really start to feel the weight of all the families who you are taking care of.

**Biggest mistake:** We were so excited about the vision that we focused more on the business plan than all of the players. We brought on a partner who owned a production company who turned out to be an awful partner.

**Smartest move:** To take the risk of having the new positioning statement — to be not just a design company, but also a production company.

**Biggest worry:** People are going to start reading about us and start chasing us. My sense is that we need to take advantage of timing to get as much real estate as we can.

**Top source of inspiration:** David Aaker, guru of brand strategy.

## DAILY ROUTINE

**Most challenging task:** Balancing being

the owner, one of the lead brand strategists, and raising a 3-year-old and making the time to make all of them all that they can be.

**Favorite task:** Leading think-tank creative sessions. If I can get four to five big brains in the room to start percolating to create an inspired moment, that's a great thing.

**Least favorite task:** I don't like it when things aren't going well with individual people.

**Biggest frustration:** The time it takes between those moments of inspiration and actualization.

**Source of support in a business crisis:** Rick Barsotti (Groove Eleven co-founder and partner).

## DREAMS

**Key goal yet to achieve:** To completely establish ourselves as a strategic partner.

**First move with capital windfall:** Bring on more high-end talent and start a more rigorous PR campaign.

**Five-year plan:** To get to a sustainable level of growth and to establish ourselves as the premier creative agency in Northern California.

**Inducement to sell:** A good partnership that would not force us to relinquish our brand.

**First choice for new career or venture:** More business to customer work. We'd like some customer facing in green categories, nonprofit or activism.

## PERSONALS

**Most-admired entrepreneur:** Steve Jobs.

**Most interested in meeting:** Bill Clinton.

**Stress reducers:** Ride bike hundreds of miles.

**Favorite pastimes:** Being a father.

**Favorite book:** "Trinity" by Leon Uris.

**Favorite film:** "Chinatown."

**Favorite restaurant:** Sushi Ran.

**Favorite destination:** Yosemite Valley.

**Automobile:** Audi Quattro.

— Kayla Platt ■