

Interview

Entrepreneurial Spirit

An Interview with Doug Reinhardt,
Chief Executive Officer, FUGEN Mobile, LLC



Doug Reinhardt

EDITORS' NOTE A former Anaheim Angels infielder, Doug Reinhardt serves as Chief Executive Officer of FUGEN Mobile, LLC and Fun Factor, LLC. He also works with Entrepreneurial Properties Corporation, where he is involved in multi-family real estate investments.

COMPANY BRIEF Founded in 2005, FUGEN Mobile (www.fugenmobile.com) is a privately owned North American company that specializes in providing global mobile messaging services and applications for consumer and enterprise markets.

You were involved in the creation of FUGEN Mobile. Will you give an overview of that business?

Mobile phones are going to overtake PCS or Web surfing by 2013. So right now, we're in the dot-com boom of the '90s with mobile phones. It has the potential to become larger and more effective as a marketing channel than any other medium, including radio and TV. SMS (Short Message Service) is a very good form of advertising. Today, with TiVo and DVR, where people can fast forward through advertisements, you send a message through SMS and 80 percent of those messages are opened. So that is what is happening now in the mobile industry.

How broad is the market you're targeting?

We're targeting everyone. Right now, we work with the Raiders, Sony, Cirque du Soleil,

and Crackle.com; we're doing an application for *Wheel of Fortune*; and we did a campaign for Lexus. We do everything from mobile SMS and text to mobile phone applications to live-streaming video through your cell phone.

Was the telemobile and the technology area of interest to you early on, or did you gravitate to it because that was where the creativity and innovation was?

I was with my friend watching television and someone told us a joke, and I thought, "Wouldn't it be great to have a joke-of-the-day service or horoscope and charge to users cell phone bill and have television commercials for people to text and sign up instantly?" We had to go to places like Japan that were on the cutting-edge of this technology to research and create the technology for use in the U.S. We also had to negotiate with the cell phone carriers like AT&T, Verizon, and others to get contracts with them in order to connect and to charge users' cell phone bills. When we started, there weren't many companies doing this; it was a brand new thing and we had to seek out and create this new technology, which corporate clients like Lexus and Sony now license from us.

You have also been involved in the real estate sector focused on the investment portfolio in certain markets, especially the Midwest and Southwest. How did you get involved in that area?

My father is one of the largest apartment owners in the Midwest. I took the money I earned playing professional baseball for six years and I invested it in apartments, because of the return and because it's such a safe investment. When I wasn't playing baseball, I would work in my father's office and research and analyze various metropolitan areas in the Midwest and Southwest to see what potential there was to invest, like in a new section of town where there would be a mall, for instance. We now own a bunch of apartments around the University of Tulsa and Oral Roberts.

Did you grow up in an entrepreneurial environment?

My father invented the frozen burrito – he's big into frozen foods, as well as real estate and technology, so I grew up learning from him. I wanted to do the same thing, and it was instilled in me to be the best at whatever I do. That is why I have a great team at FUGEN Mobile, who are friends, and I have another guy that runs my portfolio of my apartments. Right now, my

main focus is the production company that I'm starting up. We just sold two pilots, one to E! and one to A&E and, hopefully, they're on the way. So I'm all across the board, but I have the pieces in place where I can do these different things and be successful at them.

Did the production interests come from what you experienced being involved on the entertainment side through television?

I was finishing up my last semester at Pepperdine – every off season, when I was playing baseball, I'd take a semester of college at Pepperdine – and I was considering going to business school or law school, because education is very important to me and my family. Then I started getting involved in and doing guest spots on various reality shows. I started getting my own ideas and recognized that it might be something I am good at and would want to do. I started from scratch, worked my way up, and made contacts, and now I have two shows sold and hopefully a third on the way. I hope that will be a long-term success.

Does your more publicly-profiled involvement with the reality TV show *The Hills* and other things, coincide with your businesses, or do you have to segment them?

That's one of the things I'm battling right now; people don't understand the entrepreneurial side of me. They imagine that I'm just a reality star. But what I'm trying to get across is that I have all of these different businesses, and business comes first. *The Hills* was for fun, after I blew out my knee and was done playing baseball and finishing up my last year at school. But I never thought there was a future in it. I prefer being behind the camera rather than in front of it, but it's tough to get the message out about who I am when people see me portrayed on television.

Has it been important to you to stay grounded, and is that a part of how you grew up?

Yes, my mother is always making sure I remain grounded. Once you become an athlete, you develop that hard-work mindset. I didn't get as far as I did in baseball by not working hard, and I take that same work ethic into all of my businesses. That is very important, no matter what you do. If you're a teacher, salesman, entrepreneur – no matter what it is, your work ethic shows; it shows in your work and in how successful you become. ●