

Inspiring the Next Generation

An Interview with Robert L. Dilenschneider,
Founder and Principal, The Dilenschneider Group, Inc.

EDITORS' NOTE Robert Dilenschneider formed The Dilenschneider Group in 1991. Prior to founding his own firm, he served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Hill and Knowlton from 1986 to 1991, tripling that firm's revenues to nearly \$200 million and delivering more than \$30 million in profit. He was with that organization for nearly 25 years after starting his career in public relations in 1967 in New York. Dilenschneider serves as a Trustee of the Institute of



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International Education and is a member of the North American Advisory Board of The Michael Smurfit School of University College Dublin. He serves as a judge for The Olin Award, a program of the Olin School of Business at Washington University in St. Louis. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Economic Clubs of New York and Chicago and has also served on numerous corporate boards. A former member of the Board of Governors of the American Red Cross, Dilenschneider has served on the advisory board of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Board of Governors of the New York Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and The Bretton Woods Committee. He is a former member of the U.S.-Japan Business Council and the Florida Council of 100 and is a Knight of Malta. Dilenschneider has authored 15 books including his latest, *Nailing It*, which was released in December 2021. He received an MA in journalism from The Ohio State University and a BA from the University of Notre Dame. In 2001, he received an honorary Doctorate of Public Service from Muskingum College, and in 2012 he received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of New Haven.

FIRM BRIEF Headquartered in New York and Chicago, The Dilenschneider Group (dilenschneider.com) provides a limited and select few access to the finest communications professionals in the world, with experience in fields ranging from mergers and acquisitions and crisis communications to marketing, government affairs and international media. The company's objective is to bring its clients a level of communications counsel, creativity and an exposure to networks and contacts not available elsewhere.

You have written numerous books throughout your career. What interests you in writing books and what are the key themes and messages you want to convey through your books?

Business and society and politics are literally changing 24/7. What we see today is so different from what was there yesterday and five years ago and 10 years ago.

Imagine the world without social media – impossible. Think of the shrinking of newspapers in the United States – incredible. I try to capture

these points in books to bring readers as up to date as possible. I also try to inject into all the books a “human spirit” that reminds the reader that adjusting to these changes is not impossible.

Your new book, *Nailing It*, was just published. Will you discuss your vision and purpose for this book?

Innovation and change need to start somewhere and it generally is with young men and women. My goal is to let people under 35 throughout the United States and in the world know that if they put their mind to it and try to innovate, they can become real factors in society. Every single individual in the book, *Nailing It*, was in a modest position at best when they were young, and they all moved on to a different world.

What do you hope will be the impact that the stories told in *Nailing It* will have on young people and the next generation of leaders?

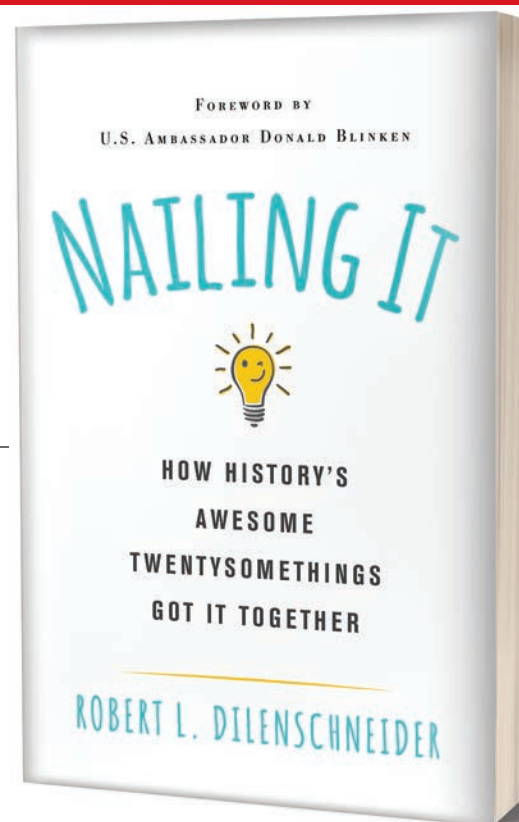
My goal is to encourage and motivate young people to move to a higher level. Already I have had reaction from some on college campuses and even from high schools who have stepped up and said, “I can do that.”

Who are you hoping to reach with *Nailing It* and how broad is the target market?

My goal is to reach young people throughout the United States and around the world. I am also most interested in communicating with those who advise and shape young people. In addition, if I can find a way to help lower the boundaries to innovation, then I will consider the book a serious success.

The country and the world are facing many crises. Should the stories and profiles of the leaders highlighted in *Nailing It* provide hope and optimism for young people who are so concerned about the future?

Young people want to see a new world. They want to have the option to create that



new world and, in many cases, they are doing just that. Look at the shape of the Fortune 500 today as opposed to just five years ago. Think about what technology and social media have done and how young people have made serious progress happen.

The Dilenschneider Group has worked closely with leaders across all industries and sectors. What do you see as the keys to effective leadership?

Effective leadership begins with advancing an idea in a way that helps people and is not threatening, that shows people they can really accomplish something, and that demonstrates to the country that industries are serving society and that more progress is at hand.

How important is it for leaders to lead with purpose today and to be focused on more than just profits?

Profit is always important, but real results come when profit is not the sole purpose. There is so much out there in the world to move forward – in medicine, in industry generally, in the service fields and more. More connectivity with an eye toward purpose, emboldening these individuals to go to a higher level, is what is needed and there is plenty of opportunity to do just that today.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers during this unprecedented time?

Young men and women have to have the courage to step out and try new things. They have to “take the bull by the horns, damn the torpedoes and go full speed ahead,” they have to stay as current as possible in a world that is changing in front of them instant by instant. Perhaps most importantly, they need to share their success with others – it takes more than one person to bring serious, lasting change. ●