

Jonathan A. Evans

Building a Championship Team

Athletics were a major part of Jonathan Evans' childhood. Both of his parents were in physical education; his mother was a local health and PE teacher, and his father was a respected teacher and coach-turned athletic director. The two imbued him with a love of sports at an early age.

In fact, Jonathan's father had won a state championship in his role as basketball coach at a high school in nearby New Haven, but when Jonathan was born, he gave up his successful coaching career for fatherhood. Additionally, as soon as Jonathan was able to swing a bat, his father, a hometown hero for the championship under his belt, was out on the field showing him the ropes of Little League. "Now the big city coach was coaching suburban t-ball and coaching kids playing basketball on little 8-foot hoops," laughs Jonathan. "I think with my father coaching me, he was definitely pushing me harder than any kid on the team. I wanted to be the best, and as the coach's son, I had to take on a leadership role. I couldn't pick a fight. I couldn't disobey because that night my dad would tell me, 'you've got to set the example, you're my son.' We were the first ones there. We were the last ones to leave. So my father coaching me really helped shape me. It set an example of hard work and leadership, and it pushed me toward that role."

All through high school, Jonathan pursued and thrived in athletics. But as he grew into adulthood, he took those leadership skills learned on the basketball and tennis courts, in the pool, and on the baseball and football fields, and turned them into professional assets. "In business, especially consulting where you're working on projects, it's never just an individual contributor kind of scenario. Government contracting is about teaming, putting teams on the ground and building the most effective teams. So the ability to work with others, incorporate a strong work ethic,

and integrating the strengths of others on your team is huge."

Today, it's clear that Jonathan took his parents' lessons to heart. He is the President and CEO of B&A, a government contractor providing IT integration and application development services. Along the way, he reorganized a rapidly growing business to achieve a new level of success for the entire company by building new teams and creating previously unseen efficiencies between departments.



Founded in 1988 under the name Bart & Associates (B&A), B&A celebrated its 32nd Anniversary last year. For its 30th Anniversary the company underwent a rebranding to reflect its changing leadership and structure. However, the new name, B&A, pays homage to the founders and where the company came from.

Over the last several years, annual revenue for the company has averaged about \$45 million, and it employs approximately 250 resources. Although B&A received 8(a) status in 2002, entitling it to pursue small-business set-aside contracts, it outgrew this designation by 2011 around the same time Jonathan joined the business full-time. His mission as Vice President of Service Delivery was to both solidify the delivery organization and improve communication between departments, all the while ensuring that B&A didn't fall back into small business status. "A lot of small businesses take this really dramatic hit when they outgrow 8(a), where they lose half their revenue," explains Jonathan. "You can't compete with the big companies, so all of a sudden you're back in the small business game. We solidified our organization, put the proper processes in place, made the appropriate investments in people, and leveled out where we are, but we are definitely poised for growth. We've structured the company with the ability to scale, because we've made those

investments in people and process. Plus, we have zero debt on the books and a healthy balance sheet. We're able to look at acquisitions, pursue highly competitive contracts, and be aggressive in how we bid. Before, we were at \$80 million in revenue with about 20% full and open contracts, we're at \$45 million now with about 70% of that from prime contracts in the full and open space. We've had to compete against companies like IBM, Accenture, Deloitte, and Northrup Grumman. We're going to be very strategic and stay focused in our areas and double our full and open revenue again."

B&A's work focuses along four service lines: human capital management, operations and enablement, integration and analytics, and modernization. They contract for several federal agencies, most significantly the Department of Homeland Security as well as the Department of Commerce, and also work for the U.S. Senate and the Judiciary branch, ensuring federal employees are paid and the government continues to operate. "We make a real impact on society," nods Jonathan. "Whether it's the mission critical system we implement on the borders that protect our nation, or the people processing systems we've implemented within airports, or a payroll system that we've implemented to pay every Senator so our government is operational. The impact that we have at this company continues to drive me. I get up every morning, I enjoy going to work, and I want to continue to make that impact."

And make an impact he certainly has. When B&A hired Jonathan in 2011 as VP of Service Delivery, only one—or possibly one and a half, Jonathan winks—of the four partners thought he might be suited for the CEO role and eventually taking the reins. Jonathan, despite having no personal connections within the company, won them all over with his tireless work ethic and talent for creating efficiencies.

Jonathan had worked with B&A for years as a customer of theirs at IBM, and then as a supplier and vendor of theirs at his own small business. He first came onboard part-time to provide assistance growing their projects and their business. By the time he switched to full-time, he was ready with all sorts of ideas to streamline the company. "I helped restructure the organization for the future," explains Jonathan, "At that time the departments and the partners were operating in silos with no oversight at the top. If one partner

handled an HR situation one way, someone might go to another partner to get a different answer. So I took over operations and solidified the organization by standardizing how we deliver value to our customers, establishing consistent operating processes and procedures, and instituting annual strategic growth plans. I found myself the glue between three executives—me as the VP of Service Delivery, the COO who controlled Operations, and the VP of Business Development and Sales. Each of these areas really needed me to drive."

Over the next several years, Jonathan began to bring in his own management team. In 2015, he was named President of the company, and in 2018, he was officially named CEO. At that time, three of the four partners agreed to step back from the day-to-day running of the business to form a Board of Directors, with the fourth already retired. "From 2015 to 2018 I began to restructure the business. I brought in a new VP of Service Delivery, a new VP of Sales, and promoted someone I had previously brought in to take over Operations," says Jonathan. "Once the company was restructured, we needed to solidify the role of the partners going forward and that's why we created the Board. Our 30th Anniversary celebration in 2018 was not only a celebration of 30 years of business but was also an opportunity to thank the four partners for their service and influence. It was also the formal changing of the guard so to speak as the leadership team was formally announced. It was a great celebration. Everyone in the company appreciated it, and we honored the partners with mementoes from all of us to mark the milestone."

It's impressive that Jonathan has risen so high at such a young age, but especially so given his background. He had no connections in DC, nor any contact with the world of federal contracting. He grew up in the small town of Hamden, Connecticut, just outside New Haven, in a house his parents still live in today. Both his mother and father, as mentioned, were in physical education, and pushed Jonathan and his younger sister to do their best in both academics and athletics.

Sports were particularly important to Jonathan, not only because of the life and leadership skills he learned, but because of the diversity it exposed him to from a young age. New Haven was close enough that the suburban kids from Hamden got to know the inner-city kids who

played on their teams, and Jonathan learned never to judge his peers by their skin color or background. Somewhat unusually, he also celebrated both Christian and Jewish holidays throughout childhood, as his father is Jewish, and his mother is Catholic which meant the family was in synagogue just as often as they were in church. At the age of 11, Jonathan's parents asked him to choose a religion, and, excited to have a Bar Mitzvah like those he'd attended for his older cousins, he chose Judaism. He ended up having a B'nai Mitzvah, or a group Bar Mitzvah with some other inter-faith kids, complete with a big party, gifts, and one meaningful one in particular.

At the B'nai Mitzvah, his father gave him a ring—a Chinese initial ring—that Jonathan today considers one of his most prized possession. The rings are a family tradition for the Evans', and for years Jonathan had worn the ring of his paternal grandfather, Albert. He felt a special connection with his father's father, although the two never met, because Jonathan was given the middle name "Albert" after his grandfather. He grew up hearing stories about how beloved his grandfather was in the community. "The ring has my initials on it. It represents the past and the history of my father's family," explains Jonathan. "But it also represents the memory of a grandfather who I never met. It's not something I wear every day. But when I do wear it on special occasions, it reminds me of my family and the importance of family."

At school, Jonathan thrived. His parents' demands for excellence didn't end on the court. His mother could be strict and once even encouraged his school to suspend him for skipping school. Jonathan laughingly admitted that their nickname for her was "Inspector Gadget," because if you did anything wrong, she was sure to sniff it out. He spoke at his sixth-grade graduation, went on to take Honors classes as he got older, and finished high school in the top 10% of his class. He was later recognized as a Distinguished Alumni inducted into the Hamden High School Education Fund Hall of Fame in 2019.

Meanwhile, outside of his schoolwork and commitment to athletics, he also took on summer jobs and worked on weekends. From mowing lawns in the summer, to shoveling snow in the winter, to working at sports camps, to cleaning apartment buildings owned by his father and uncle, Jonathan kept busy and earned his own spending money. Once he was able to drive, he

became an assistant tennis pro. "My parents really instilled that work ethic in me," reflects Jonathan. "I got exposed to a lot of different jobs. It was never an option not to work. My parents were okay financially so it was not out of necessity that I worked. They encouraged me to work knowing it would enhance my work ethic. There was no slacking off in the Evans' household."

By the time he got to high school, Jonathan had to make some decisions about his sports teams. He was getting older, and could no longer play several sports during the same season; he had to commit. He chose to take a chance with football in the fall, basketball in the winter, and tennis in the spring, giving up swimming and baseball. Although he loved athletics, when it came time to think about colleges, Jonathan knew athletics wasn't going to be a career for him, and wisely chose to focus on academics. "I was good enough that I could have played at a Division III school," Jonathan points out. "But I accepted the fact that I wasn't going to be a professional athlete. And attending a small liberal arts Division III school the same size as my high school didn't appeal to me."

Jonathan was more drawn to universities in the Big Ten conference. He was impressed by their size and the energy he felt on their campuses. His father, a Syracuse graduate, tried to lobby for Syracuse, but once Jonathan set foot on the Penn State campus, he'd already decided. He applied to Penn State and left for State College, PA the next fall. The decision turned out to have been a strong one; not only did he love his time there, joining a fraternity and making time for tailgates, he was able to study abroad in Spain, and double major in both Business Logistics and International Business.

In the summers, Jonathan took on internships hoping to get a foothold in the professional world. Following his freshman year, he went to work at family friend's business but found it wasn't quite what he'd signed up for. "My father's friend had a business where they broke down IT equipment for metals," Jonathan recalls. "He told me I could intern there and be exposed to business," recalls Jonathan. "But they didn't have enough work for me and threw me in the warehouse to separate metals from computer parts. What I wanted to truly get exposed to was the operations side of the business and unfortunately that didn't come to fruition."

The next summer, he had more success, living with relatives in Nantucket for the summer,

ordering supplies and learning the logistics side of business. Finally, he had enough credits to be placed with large corporations via a program at Penn State, and he was able to work with Photonics on the technology side and then later with Staples on supply chain and logistics.

Because his double major required additional credits, Jonathan stayed at Penn State for four and a half years. Upon his graduation at the end of the fall semester, he wasted no time launching his career. "I graduated just before Christmas, got home on December 20th, 2003, and on January 10th, 2004, my parents dropped me off in DC and wished me luck," laughs Jonathan.

Thanks to his work ethic and the impressive internships under his belt, Jonathan had been offered a position with IBM, where he quickly displayed a talent for the business world. Only a handful of years later he was growing his own business into a multi-million-dollar business. By 2011, he was offered VP of Service Delivery at B&A – a mere seven years after his parents had dropped him off in DC and wished him luck.

To young people looking to replicate his success, Jonathan's advice is simple and straightforward: work hard. "Working hard is first and foremost and is crucial to your success," he affirms, "Put in those extra hours. Be committed to things. You have to set yourself apart, and the only way to set yourself apart when it comes to business and success is doing the work that is required. When you look at stories of people who achieved success, nothing is given to them. When I came to DC, I didn't know a person in the business world, I had no family connections. If I had gone into education, my dad probably could've made a call and gotten me a teaching job, but I took that

risk because I knew I could work hard, and I could put those extra hours in, and this was something I was passionate about doing."

When it comes to leadership, Jonathan is all about using the teamwork skills he learned so long ago from his parents and on the court. "I'm a hands-on guy," smiles Jonathan. "If we have a proposal due at eight in the morning, and we're working late to get it buttoned up, or get the printing done, or get it boxed, I'm there with the team. I'll even run and grab dinner if needed. I think all of these things—how I lead and how I engage with my team—it all came from that early exposure to sports. Of course, my father's coaching helped shape me as a leader. I wanted to be the best on the field and on the court when I was a kid, and I want to be the best in business."

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