

SELF-HELP MOGUL RETURNS TO IRVINE STOMPING GROUND

By **JORDAN GRAHAM**
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

In 1989, Alex Rusch journeyed from Switzerland to America with two large suitcases, \$3,300 in his pocket, and the goal of attending Irvine Valley College to take classes he could not find back home.

Twenty-four years later, Rusch is a multi-millionaire self-help mogul with a publishing company, a seminar and training business, and a marketing firm.

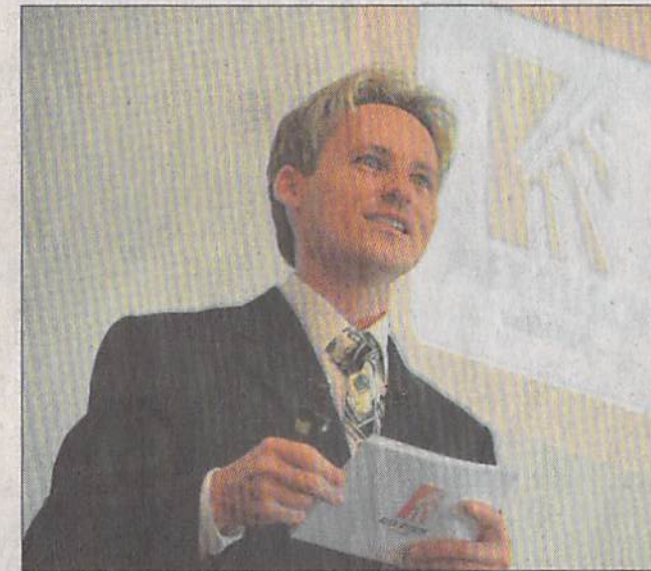
Rusch credits much of his success to techniques and life skills he learned while in Irvine.

This winter, Rusch returned for an eight-week trip. The Irvine World News took the opportunity to interview the author and entrepreneur about his road from community college to business owner.

Q. What brought you to Irvine Valley College in 1989?

A. I just wanted to get to know America. It was my goal to spend 12 months here and to go to college to take some classes that I could pick myself. I chose those classes that were

new to me, that I could add to what I had learned in business college in Switzerland. Here, I was able to learn things like public speaking, argumentation and debate, acting and entrepreneurship, which was a very important class.



COURTESY OF ALEX RUSCH

Alex Rusch attended Irvine Valley College 24 years ago. Today, he is a self-help publishing mogul in Switzerland.

That was something that we didn't learn in Switzerland. I was here for a year, then I went back to Switzerland for a year, then I came back for 18 months and took some more classes.

Q. What brings you back now?

A. I love Orange County. I love the weather. I love the

inspiration. People don't know me here. It's different in Switzerland, because there, I'm sort of a celebrity who is quite often in newspapers and magazines ... I am still in contact with some of my old professors (here).

Q. What inspired you to become a motivational speaker

and self-help publisher?

A. When I was 17, I got my first self-help book. It was "How to Win Friends and Influence People" by Dale Carnegie. Here in America, I went to the Heritage Park Library in Irvine quite often. That's when I got very interested in self-help and motivation. And when I took all these entrepreneurship classes at Irvine Valley College, I started to write down business ideas. So I had a whole binder full with business ideas. And when I went back to Switzerland in 1992, I didn't know what I would do. But in 1994, that spark of inspiration came and I said OK, 'I will just go for it, start a publishing company and publish an audio book.' I was very determined to succeed.

Q. Is there any difference between self-help for Americans and Europeans?

A. People are very interested (in America) to get ahead in life. In Germa-

ny, Switzerland and Austria, people are not so entrepreneurial. You have to do marketing, which ended up being a good thing. Because it was tough to start that business, I had to become very good at marketing. I turned a challenge into an advantage. The marketing strategies I learned in America work in Germany, but people are more conservative. We can't be quite as aggressive in Europe.

Q. Any advice you'd like to offer to Irvine students?

A. Learn as much as possible, and try to learn the right things. I knew more or less which direction I wanted to do and chose those classes. And not just learning it, but applying it. Be goal oriented. When I started my business, I was 25 years old. ... It's good to start early, try a lot of things, and learn from it.

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