

PROFILE

LAUREN SELIG & KYRIL FAENOV:

Power partnership forged in TMMBA

By Ed Kromer



Lauren Selig (TMMBA 2002) and Kyril Faenov (TMMBA 2002) will always have Paris.

It's where they were engaged to be married in 2002, a modest proposal on bended knee by Faenov that was observed with typical Gallic indifference by patrons at surrounding tables.

The event was received with considerable more enthusiasm by classmates in the Technology Management MBA Program who joined them the next day to begin a study tour of France and Switzerland. "It ended up being a fun, two-week-long engagement party with all of our friends," says Selig, who took the program's tenet of networking personally.

So began the loving, prospering partnership of two people from very different worlds. Selig, the daughter of Seattle real estate developer Martin Selig, studied at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and the

London School of Economics before working as a film editor and a music agent for film composers. "I know it sounds kind of strange because in LA you're not supposed to need a degree in anything," she says, "but I actually felt guilty negotiating for my client without a law or business degree."

So Selig went to Northwestern University to get them, working summers back in Seattle at Play Networks and Microsoft.

Her future husband was already there. Faenov had grown up in Moscow, a competitive swimmer who studied physics and mathematics. After the fall of the Soviet Union allowed a move to the United States, he earned degrees in computer science then did consulting work for Intel. There, he fell in with a group of visionary programmers who were developing software that allowed clusters of cheap PCs to solve problems that once required the service of expensive supercomputers. His partnership with them yielded several start-ups, most recently Valence Research, acquired in 1998 by Microsoft. Faenov moved to Redmond and became a central player in many Microsoft initiatives over the past decade.

But he wasn't too busy to be taken with the sparkling redhead he met at a party thrown by friends from work in 2000. After meeting, Selig and Faenov became friends and started dating casually. Casual moved to serious when they found themselves on the same TMMBA study team.

Since then Selig and Faenov have flourished. Today, Faenov is general manager of High Performance Computing at Microsoft. "It's an amazing place," he says, "this unique combination of some

of the smartest people from all over the world being fed on ambitious goals and given the freedom and resources to achieve them. I'm given full control here, and more funding than VCs would ever give me."

Faenov is a member of the Alliance of Angels, Social Venture Partners and the Washington Software Alliance, as well as a judge at the UW Business Plan Competition.

Equally entrepreneurial, Selig joined her father's company several years ago and has taken on new development, leasing and the firm's new venture funding wing. A community activist, she also has co-opted her own childhood nickname for two side projects. Lala Laptop is her critically acclaimed line of fashionable, functional, fun handbags. And "Little Lala" is her first children's book, inspired by the couple's two-year-old daughter, about a little girl who travels the world to throw a fabulous party for her friends.

Selig and Faenov may be a living argument for opposites attracting. "I build tangible, he builds intangible," Selig explains, laughing. "Perfectly compatible."

But dig deeper and you find a couple deeply invested in family, passionate about the transformational quality of well-managed technology (they serve on the board of the UW Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences), and committed to an active, entrepreneurial brand of philanthropy. "In Lauren, I have found an incredible partner," Faenov says. "We come from very different backgrounds, but our values and what we aspire to are very much on the same page." ■