

LUMINA FOUNDATION

FOCUS™

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Cutting-edge-ucators

Dedicated disrupters find innovative ways to offer college-level learning



INSIDE

His software weaves a web of support
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On the cover: Helen Adeosun is co-founder and CEO of CareAcademy, a Massachusetts-based firm that produces online instruction for home caregivers that's designed to be delivered via mobile phone or computer tablet. Adeosun, a 34-year-old daughter of Nigerian immigrants, founded the business in 2013, drawing on her own eclectic life experiences. She's had many, including work as a babysitter, a nanny, a teacher, a social worker, and a home-health worker.



Editor's note: The stories in this issue of Focus were reported and written by Bob Caylor, a journalist with more than 30 years of experience at newspapers in Minnesota, Ohio, and Indiana. At the News-Sentinel in Fort Wayne, Indiana, he was an award-winning columnist and editorial writer and reported extensively on business and environmental issues. He is now a writer and photographer for Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana, as well as a freelance journalist and book editor. He also is ghostwriting a book on investing.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There are at least two ways to look at everything, including innovation.

One way — let's call it the radical approach — was aptly expressed by Charles F. Kettering, the early 20th century engineer who invented the first electric cash register and later co-founded Delco. Kettering said this:

"If you've always done it that way, it's probably wrong."

Champion boxer Oscar De La Hoya advocated another, less revolutionary approach.

He said this:

"There's always space for improvement, no matter how long you've been in the business."

At Lumina Foundation, we've long pushed for innovation in the nation's system of higher learning. For years, it's been clear — to us and to economists and other experts — that business as usual won't work, that traditional approaches to post-high school education simply can't produce the talent our nation needs to succeed.

So which approach to innovation is best — incremental improvement or radical change?

Simple. We need both ... and everything in between. The need for talent is that urgent, and the stakes are that high.

To ensure individual prosperity and national stability, America's most agile, innovative, entrepreneurial minds must tackle this challenge. They must redefine "college" and create new ways to deliver that vital learning experience to millions more Americans.

Fortunately, that's happening. Educational innovators are out there, and this issue of Focus magazine will introduce you to just a few of them. For example:

- You'll meet Helen Adeosun, co-founder and CEO of CareAcademy, a Massachusetts-based firm that produces instructional modules for home caregivers and makes the lessons available on mobile phones or tablet computers. Adeosun, the daughter of Nigerian immigrants, built her company by mining her own work and life experience. Before launching CareAcademy, she worked as a babysitter, a nanny, a teacher, a social worker — and as a home-health worker herself. Her company, founded in 2013, now has more than 200 home-health companies as clients, and 25,000 workers have completed at least one of the lessons or continuing-education classes it offers.
- You'll learn about Brian Hill, founder of Edovo, a Chicago-based company that equips incarcerated men and women with tablet computers loaded with educational software. Hill grew up in a California family devoted to serving others. His father, a community college psychology instructor, also taught classes to inmates in Folsom State Prison, and he used that experience to foster empathy among young Brian and his five siblings. Decades later, Brian Hill has combined that empathetic urge with an entrepreneurial spirit to build a thriving company. In just a few years, Edovo has gone from startup status to an 85-employee firm that now makes more than 25,000 tablet computers available in correctional facilities.
- Finally, you'll get to know Melvin Hines Jr., co-founder of a Texas-based educational software firm called Upswing. As a teen in Albany, Georgia, Hines was disturbed by the dismally low graduation rate among his high school classmates — and downright shocked when he got to college and saw how economic and social inequities hamper many students. Soon after earning his degrees (in economics, business, and law), Hines addressed his concerns: He and a partner founded Upswing. Today, the firm's products are helping more than 80 colleges and universities boost students' success by facilitating peer tutoring, intrusive advising, and other services.

These three entrepreneurs — and their companies — are part of a vital trend: the embrace of innovation in education. All across the nation, creative people such as these are working to make learning more accessible, more flexible, more tailored to today's students, and more relevant to the world in which they live and work.

At Lumina, we've long supported such work, and recently we took a new step in this direction — an appropriately innovative one. In 2015, we established an in-house unit called Lumina Impact Ventures — a fund through which we invest directly in companies that are pioneering new ways to increase educational attainment. The firms featured here are among the 14 companies in the Lumina Impact Ventures portfolio.

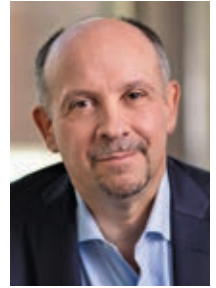
In addition to the material in this printed version of Focus, there's a wealth of additional information on our website, www.luminafoundation.org. There, Focus offers several extra features, including compelling videos of the entrepreneurs and their clients, and links to related content.

Whether in print, on the web, or in your social media feeds, all of the material in this issue of Focus is designed to highlight the work of today's education innovators and generate more interest in what drives them. The three entrepreneurs featured here have a lot in common — much more than the fact that each is 34 years old and leads a firm that has received Lumina funding. Each has a compelling back story. Prior to founding an innovative company in 2013, each of them pursued a career that didn't quite fit. And they all show a dogged determination to succeed.

Perhaps most important, though, is their common embrace of a trait that's far too uncommon among business-people these days: genuine social responsibility. Yes, they're all in business, and they all want their businesses to succeed. But their definition of success goes far beyond merely showing a profit.

At the root of it, each of them is in business to improve lives. They're working to provide life-changing learning, to make knowledge more available to those who need it most.

At Lumina, we get that. In fact, we work every day toward the very same goal. We hope these stories inspire you to join us in that effort.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. P. Merisotis".

Jamie P. Merisotis
President and CEO
Lumina Foundation

Upswing's Melvin Hines Jr.:

Always racing to connect



An avid runner, Melvin Hines Jr. jogs along the Colorado River in Austin, Texas — in the shadow of Google's 35-story office tower. Upswing, the educational software firm that Hines leads, has its offices near the river's opposite, southern bank.

students with success

AUSTIN, Texas —

When Melvin Hines Jr. began his freshman year of high school in Albany, Georgia, there were 250 people in his class. As his senior year began, only 120 remained. He's never forgotten the grinding attrition that stranded so many young people without the most fundamental boost into adult life. "I had friends who got pregnant, friends who died, friends who went to jail. By the time graduation came around, there were 68 of us who actually made it," he said.

When he studied economics at the University of Georgia and rolled through law school at Duke University, the gulf between the high-flying scholars around him and the high school dropouts left behind grew even wider. Hines, now 34, took the first step in bridging that gap while still an undergraduate at Georgia, volunteering with Big Brothers/Big Sisters in Athens.

"I thought: 'Somebody ought to do something about this. How can things be so disparate?' I was keeping in touch with my high school friends and knowing what happened to them, and yet I have these college friends who are doing so many amazing things. How do you reconcile those two?"

Hines went on to teach while still in law school, and he joined a business consulting firm. Only 11 years after he became one of those 68 graduates in his high school class, he left consulting and began helping students by the thousands overcome obstacles to graduation — in this case, college graduation.

Upswing, the company he founded in 2013 with Alex Pritchett, now has more than 80 colleges and universities and one virtual high school as clients. They use the firm's software to weave stronger connections and prompt faster responses among students, tutors and advisors. That's a total of 700,000 students who can use Upswing to connect with peers who point them toward academic success.

AdviseUp, one of the tools in Upswing's suite of products, is a key to identifying students in need of help. College staff and faculty use it to record specific signs that students are struggling. "For example, three different professors can go in and say there's someone missing too many classes," Hines said. "There's an alert for failing grades on tests. There's even emotional distress alerts or flags that can be created as well."

Counselors can also use AdviseUp as a preventive tool, to identify problems before they grow into insurmountable obstacles. "It's the same thing with an advisor who might want to see all the students who've been missing classes in the last week," Hines said.

Ana is another innovative tool in the Upswing suite. It's a program that uses conversational prompts and responses to assist students — much like an academic version of Apple's Siri. For example, Ana can remind students of upcoming tests, offer help in completing financial aid applications, suggest tutoring sessions, or inform students about counseling services.

Connecting commuters

One of the schools that has embraced Upswing is Kwantlen Polytechnic University, based in Surrey, British Columbia, just southeast of Vancouver. Its 20,000 students attend classes at five campuses around southwest British Columbia, as well as online. There is no campus housing at any of Kwantlen's sites. Every student is a commuter.

That university uses only AskUp and TutorUp, two Upswing services devoted to tutoring. They are crucial in helping Kwantlen nurture success among its students.

Hines confers with Upswing co-founder Alex Pritchett (seated). The two launched the firm in 2013, starting with a pilot program designed to schedule tutoring sessions for 60 students in one high school. Upswing now has more than 80 education institutions as clients, making its products available to some 700,000 students.





Hines gathers members of the Upswing staff for a quick meeting in the firm's headquarters. The company, now in its sixth year of operation, has 25 employees.





With no base of resident students to form a social hub for the university, some faculty and staff struggle to connect with students. “That’s why Upswing is a bonus to us,” said Lyn Benn, the university’s director of student development and success. “Students can access us from anywhere. It’s really important that they have that social connection, and that’s what Upswing does.”

Again, Kwantlen’s partnership with Upswing is entirely focused on the company’s tutoring software. That’s because tutoring is central to the university’s efforts to keep students enrolled, help top students excel, and support those who struggle. And here’s a difference that makes Upswing even more important: The university’s tutoring force is composed entirely of students. There are no graduate programs at Kwantlen; the tutors are all undergraduates helping other undergraduates.

Upswing “has a different interface, like a social-media interface. You can see who the tutors are. You can read their profiles. You can see when they’re available,” Benn said. She adds that 60 percent of students are immigrants or from immigrant families, so finding a tutor with a shared culture or language helps break barriers and promote better learning. “When people see someone who looks like them and might sound like them, and who are successful students, then that’s an incentive to a student to sign up with them,” Benn said.

Upswing does more to put students in touch than simply provide a searchable roster of tutors. For example, Christina Page, a learning strategist at Kwantlen’s Learning Centre, said some students prefer the messaging function that’s built into Upswing’s TutorUp platform.

Some students find it daunting to craft an email — too much like writing a letter, Page explained. For them, Upswing includes an option to send messages through a simple chatbox, with no more formality or structure than tapping out a text message on a smartphone.

Upswing’s AskUp product allows students who need help with their writing to upload a draft of their work, along with assignment requirements. This “asynchronous writing tutoring” allows a tutor to pull another student’s work out of a queue, review it and offer feedback. The intended turnaround time is quick. Tutor Shahina Hakik, 21, says she responds in 30-45 minutes when she does asynchronous tutoring. The limit is 45 minutes, she said.

Hakik is a psychology major, but in a little over a year as a tutor, she has helped only one or two students in psychology. The rest of her work has been in writing. Writing and math are by far the subjects in which students request the most help. Hakik said many of the students she tutors are in their first semester at Kwantlen. A typical plea: “I have no idea how to write an essay,” she said.

Two ways to tutor

Page said that providing a single platform for all of the asynchronous writing tutoring is one of Upswing’s advantages over programs Kwantlen used before Upswing, which the school adopted three years ago. She also



Tutor Shahina Hakik works on an English grammar lesson with Astha Khanna (right), a business administration major at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey, British Columbia. In addition to one-on-one tutoring, Hakik is very active in Upswing's AskUp system, which allows tutors to download student projects and provide online feedback.



Veteran tutors Jarren Ralf (left) and Sweta Shrestha coordinate their notes for an international mathematics competition. The pair, both majoring in applied mathematics, collaborated on a YouTube video that helped Kwantlen students understand how to use Upswing's Whiteboard tool for online tutoring.

appreciates the way Upswing makes face-to-face tutoring more available during evenings and on weekends. Even students who can't make it to campus during typical tutoring hours can schedule online tutoring via the company's TutorUp video interface.

Page also noted that Upswing accommodates the whole range of tutors and subjects across all of Kwantlen's campuses. Because so much of the tutoring involves writing, math, or accounting, students might overlook the help available in other fields, but it's out there. "If it's in our (course) catalog, we tutor it," said Alice Macpherson, another learning strategist at the university. There's no flood of requests for tutoring in fashion design or drafting, but the 60 undergraduate tutors can answer when those calls come — through Upswing scheduling, naturally.

Kwantlen staff, who train a constantly changing cast of student tutors, also see opportunities to improve that training by using Upswing. A great example was initiated by two fourth-year students who are described by staff members as star tutors.

Sweta Shrestha, 23, and Jarren Ralf, 25, both majored in applied mathematics, and both used Upswing's Whiteboard tool for online tutoring. Online tutoring

sessions accounted for less than 3 percent of the more than 16,000 tutoring sessions at Kwantlen in 2018. Most tutors say they prefer face-to-face sessions, but for some students, online sessions offer the benefits of tutoring without travel to a campus.

In January, Ralf and Shrestha made a six-minute video tour of the functions and capabilities of Upswing's Whiteboard, which is still available on YouTube. The quick introduction shows how this software-aided whiteboard is much more versatile than the wall-mounted version in a typical classroom. Students can sketch on it freehand, switch to a library of equations and mathematical notation, upload documents as .pdf files, or even converse via voice-recognition software. When a session ends, a student can download every screen a tutor has drawn and even save a transcript of the chatbox conversations.

Benn, Page, and other staff members who guide the tutors at Kwantlen hope that students will soon book far more online sessions. "It's only now that we're getting awareness of it with tutors, because we've included it with training," Benn said.

It was a long road — longer than the number of passing years might indicate — that took Hines from

that Georgia high school to his Texas-based tech startup.

Majoring in economics at the University of Georgia shaped his thinking about human incentives and motives. "I found out that I'm interested in how people think and what makes people do things or what causes people's life circumstances to change. Economics really spoke to me because it was all about behavior. It could be psychology instead of economics, but economics allows you to put numbers to it," he said.

Hines excelled in law school at Duke University, founding a law review in his second year called "The Forum for Law and Social Change." While still in law school, he was invited to teach a class for first-year law students at nearby North Carolina Central University, a historically black university, to help the students stay in the program.

As much as he enjoyed those side pursuits in law school, Hines wasn't thrilled with actually practicing law. "At the end of the day, it's not awesome work," he said. "You're always trying to get paid by someone, except for the nonprofit piece. There, I thought the work they were doing was pretty admirable, but they were very much hamstrung by government regulations, so they couldn't really do a whole lot. They couldn't file class actions, for example. So very little actually moved forward."

Academic cross-training

Hines had a few friends who were doubling up, pursuing law degrees and MBAs simultaneously, and they persuaded him to try it. The combination — which some might see as a dual nightmare — proved to be great cross-training for him.

"In law school, you focus on one thing and go really deep," he said. "You don't learn how to go outside that little box. Once you go out into the real world, you're really good at telling people why what they did is bad for them, but you're not very good at prescribing, at telling them how to change their lives. In business school, it's the opposite. People come in with millions of ideas. The world is your oyster! But they don't come in with very much depth or the ability to think critically about why a particular idea won't work or what are some of the potential risk factors of going down this route. If people doing one would take at least a few classes in the other, I think they would come out much better positioned for the real world."

After he secured both professional degrees, Hines was hired by a business-consulting firm. As it turned out, the most valuable thing he did there for his own career was to meet a co-worker who introduced him to Pritchett, who would become Upswing's co-founder. Both grew up in Georgia. More important, both were intensely interested in improving the circumstances of people who face obstacles in life.

Pritchett, now 30, was working for a software developer, but he already was an experienced nonprofit entrepreneur. One of his nonprofit ventures is a microfinance firm that





Kwantlen Polytechnic University administrators and staff work in concert to make the best use of Upswing's student success software. (Clockwise, from far left): Alice Macpherson, learning strategist; Lyn Benn, director of student development and success; Christina Page, learning strategist; and Harpreet Sandhu and Emily Tan, both coordinators in the university's Learning Centre.



Hines works closely with Upswing's staff. Here, while Sales Manager Sarah Cariello works on her laptop in the background, he confers with (clockwise, from right): Brent Hametner, marketing manager; Alicia Bergeron, higher education retention officer; and Victoria Alonzo, director of retention.



has so far loaned more than \$500,000 to some 1,000 low-income borrowers for specific projects to improve their lives.

Room for brainstorming

In 2012, Hines and Pritchett rented a house together, one large enough that even with other housemates, there was still an empty room. That became their “brainstorming room.” Late that year, they agreed it was time to see whether they could build a software product to help kids who might struggle in school.

By March 2013, they landed a meeting with a school administrator in Durham, North Carolina, who urged them to pilot their plan by creating a package that would help schedule tutoring. He wanted the pilot to serve 60 high school students, and he agreed to pay \$600.

“Six hundred dollars!” Pritchett said. “That felt like real validation!” They scrambled to piece together the first crude version of their TutorUp interface from off-the-rack software components. And some of those racks were in the bargain basement.

“We bought the hosting package off of eBay for, like, \$9 — and within a week of us starting the program, the host center went down,” Hines recalled. “We couldn’t access anything. ... Then, the morning before we were supposed to start, everything just popped up again. We walked in like there were never any issues in the first place.”

They quickly improved their software and web hosting, and later in 2013 they established their first footholds in North Carolina community colleges.

Hines and Pritchett have come a long way from celebrating a \$600 contract. By the end of 2017, the company had raised \$3 million in venture funding, first from individual angel investors and later from institutional investors, including Lumina Impact Ventures. Connecting with these larger investors has been transformative, Hines said.

“It definitely changes a lot, that’s for sure. What it means first and foremost is you can fund-raise less, because the check size is a lot larger. ... And for the most part, angel money is just that: money. You still have to figure out everything else on your own. The difference with someone like a Lumina is that they’re providing the angel funds but they’re also providing all these different networks that you didn’t have before,” Hines said. Strategic partnerships not only provide access to new investors, they also can be a source of business expertise that can help a young company refine its operations, he said.

Upswing now has 25 employees, and though Hines doesn’t discuss revenue figures publicly, he said that over the last few years, revenue has increased 40-50 percent per year. Through all the growth and the development of more elaborate products, Hines said, the goal that drove him and Pritchett six years ago remains the same.

“What we’re trying to do is say, ‘Even if you’re starting at a different starting line, it doesn’t mean you can’t make the race you’re running a little faster, a little easier.’” ■

Edovo's Brian Hill:

Using technology to unlock

The Edovo logo is displayed in a large, light-colored, sans-serif font against a blue background. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The logo is partially cut off on the right side of the image.

CHICAGO —

Brian Hill lives an audacious mission: He's out to save 2.3 million people from "The Jerry Springer Show." That's the population now held in America's prisons and jails. And for Hill, the tawdry slapstick of Springer's shout show exemplifies what's wrong with prison: Prisoners have so much time on their hands that they fill with empty distraction — including hours, days and years of daytime TV — rather than anything constructive. That waste of human potential appalls him.

Unlock prisoners' potential



Brian Hill, 34, is the founder of Edovo, a Chicago-based company that makes tablet computers and educational software available to incarcerated men and women. The firm, launched in 2013, now has more than 80 employees and has made the tablets available to more than 25,000 prisoners.

Six years ago, Hill embraced the task of inducing prisoners to reach for more than the channel selector. He founded Edovo, a Chicago-based company that equips incarcerated men and women with tablet computers. Those tablets help prisoners learn everything from how to read to what evidence supports the Big Bang theory of cosmic origins.

He's made headway. Now 25,000-30,000 prisoners have access to Edovo tablets each day. And the company is growing — thanks in part to its 2017 acquisition of a phone company that offers correctional facilities a way to pay for tablets, if administrators want Edovo tablets along with phone service.

Hill, 34, has long felt compelled to harness untapped potential. It's a tendency that goes back much further than the 2013 founding of Edovo.

In 1995 and again in 1997, when Hill was just a boy, heavy rains brought devastating January flooding to Sacramento, near his northern California home. His family was a civic-minded Mormon crew, committed to community service, so it was no surprise that they were drawn to the flooded areas where people had gathered to help.

What did surprise Hill was that that turned out to be the *only* thing most people did — gather.

"You'd show up, and there'd be 50 people there. You'd realize when you got there that no one would take charge or know how to do it. Yet all this important work needs to be done. That's where I realized at a young age that somebody needs to take charge. We need to get this done. So (I was) able to lead out at a couple of those events, just by virtue of being the only one who spoke up and started guiding people and leading people. That made me realize that we can make big things happen, but in order to make big things happen, leadership is required," Hill said.

Motivated by meaning

Hill's education and his more conventional, pre-Edovo business career helped him understand something about himself. He likes to compete and win in business, but, unless driven by meaning and mission, sales conquests are just a game. And he likes to help people, but any one person's capacity to help is puny when weighed against the magnitude and urgency of the world's problems.

"There are these two drives," he said. "One is entrepreneurial in nature. The other is about helping people. When they come together, it's a lot of fun. I can get excited about either for a short time, but if they don't coalesce at some point..."

In Hill's career, those drives merge in Edovo. The company shows strong growth, and the figures Hill is willing to disclose look promising. But Edovo's numbers are only a shadow of its story. The more compelling part is being told by those who benefit.

At the Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility near Ypsilanti, in southeastern Michigan, 205 Edovo





Hill presides over a staff meeting that includes (clockwise from bottom left): Mike Ebert, Sunjay Kumar, Nathan Burton Jr., Abby Raskin, and Joe Deng. Hill says he and his Edovo co-workers are acting on two drives. "One is entrepreneurial in nature," he says. "The other is about helping people."

tablets are available for the 2,100 women incarcerated there. Nearly 900 of the women have registered accounts on Edovo tablets, said Tony Costello, assistant education manager for the Michigan Department of Corrections. The prison's tablet users have racked up 140,000 hours of "productive" time — time spent on education or personal development, not just listening to music or watching movies or playing games. That's an average of 159 hours per account holder since the tablets were introduced in mid-2017.

Shamekia Ballentine, 40, is doing more than her share to raise that average. Edovo software can display the number of lessons, courses (groups of related lessons), and certificates (sequences of instruction in a particular area, such as personal finance or customer service) that an account-holder has completed. Ballentine is proud of her Edovo record: 471 lessons, 101 courses, and 77 certificates.

"I go on here to keep my mind freshened up," Ballentine said. "I try to get knowledge in everything."

She's working on an associate degree in business and ultimately hopes to earn a bachelor's degree. She'd like to own her own business on the outside, or at least be able to run one well. "If I can't own my own business, I want to partner with someone," she said.

Edovo builds its instruction around a simple incentive: Spend an hour working on material designed for education or personal development, earn an hour of

entertainment — games, music or movies. The movies include dramas, action, comedies, and even movies in Spanish or with captions for hearing-impaired prisoners.

Although Ballentine likes the educational offerings, she'd like to see Edovo provide more "gender-specific lessons." As someone who aspires to a business career after her release, scheduled in September 2020, she'd appreciate lessons that offer guidance on "how to be feminine in male-dominated areas."

Some women at Huron Valley use the tablets for traditional academic work that has long been offered in prisons. But the tablets make it easier for them to pursue such education at their own pace.

Whitney Ritter, 28, completed all her GED courses on the tablet. As she looks back more than a decade at her high school years, she said: "I liked school, but I don't think I put a lot of effort into it. I was there to socialize."

After LaKisha Turner, 41, is released in May, she wants to get a job driving a delivery truck. She's used the tablets to work on lessons that will help her earn a commercial driver's license. One business course she found inspiring is called "Illegal to Legal." In it, prisoners are urged to apply the planning and organization they used in crimes to operate legitimate businesses. "The teachers said criminals are some of the best businessmen," Turner said.

Self-help lessons and courses are popular with nearly all of the inmates. Anger management is a staple in prison



(From left) Dominica Sims, Shamekia Ballentine, and LaKisha Turner, all inmates at the Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility near Ypsilanti, Michigan, work together with their Edovo tablets in the facility's library. The tablets have been available to the women at Huron Valley since the summer of 2017.

Keri Bennett, here conferring with fellow Huron Valley inmate Valerie Mitchell (right), says she likes the fact that Edovo's self-help courses allow for private reflection and introspection. Rather than sharing feelings in an open setting, she says: "I can write it all. I can be more honest. I can be more open."



classrooms all over the country, but the women at Huron Valley say Edovo's anger-management material is better. For one thing, the tablet courses go into much greater depth than the live classroom work at the state prison.

More important, it's safer. In a social environment where juicy information sizzles through the grapevine faster than flame along a fuse, revealing weaknesses or vulnerabilities can be dangerous; it gives too much power to others. But when a prisoner works through sensitive material in an Edovo lesson, she does so safely, through reflection and introspection. It remains securely private.

Keri Bennett, 32, says the women are understandably wary of sharing too much in a prison classroom. "You can have an enemy in here, and she can use it against you. ... Then they know how to push you," Bennett said. With an Edovo course, she said, "I can write it all. I can be more honest. I can be more open. I'm giving, and I'm not being taken."

Tablets bring calm

Costello, the prison-education administrator, is an enthusiastic advocate for the tablets. He sees how well Edovo can engage prisoners, and he says it has a calming effect in the prison as a whole. Incidents of misconduct, such as being in an unauthorized cell or mouthing off to a guard, have dropped by 25 percent since Edovo tablets became available, he pointed out. Perhaps it's no surprise, then, that two of the top four Edovo courses are titled Anger Management and Peace Education. The other two? Beyond Prison: On Parole and Probation, and Parenting.

None of this would surprise Hill. Edovo staff get lots of direct feedback from inmates who use the tablets — from requests to add specific movies to pointing out errors in material. "They're an incredible (quality assurance) team for us," he said.

Admittedly, it's a different type of team from the ones



Hill encountered in his pre-entrepreneurial days in the corporate world, including his four years at General Mills. That stint taught him a lot about rigorous business operation and analysis, and he enjoyed the people he worked with. But pitching processed food never really fed his spirit.

"I couldn't wake up every morning and feel good about increasing the volume of Totino's Pizza sold in northern California," Hill quipped. "In fact, I think I've got some sins to repay. In reality...we crushed some (sales) numbers. So more people were headed early on for diabetes."

He left General Mills in 2012 to begin a combined MBA/law school program at Northwestern University. While investigating the idea of socially conscious investing, he connected with Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart and persuaded him to back an experiment to use TVs to provide educational programming to prisoners in Cook County Jail. The project launched in October 2013 — and failed immediately.

"I'll never forget that feeling," Hill said. "It was an immediate recognition that we got it wrong. You could feel the tension in the room," he said.

In retrospect, he sees several problems with using television for educational programming in prison. First, it presents a single stream of learning. If you want to learn about business for an associate degree, and it's GED math day on TV, you're out of luck. Second, Hill sees an element of groupthink that discourages inmates from tuning in on televised lessons.

"Individually, everyone says they want to learn. In a group, it's not cool to learn anymore," he said.

Hill said he also sees now that an important choice in prison is what to watch. Groups of prisoners typically vote on the daily viewing schedule, he said. Imposing one stream of programming deprives them of a decision in an environment already stripped of much autonomy. Finally, developing compelling television programming



Jason Roy, an instructor at Huron Valley, discusses the Edovo lessons with (from far left) Amanda Kosal, Stephanie Irvin, and Marquette Tarver. Roy is bullish on the tablet program. "It works," he says. "It allows them to continue learning outside the classroom."





Hill isn't just a busy entrepreneur; he also has a full home life. He and his wife Callie — shown here in the kitchen of their home in Evanston, Illinois — are raising four daughters (from left): Eden, 9; Riley, 7; Lauren, 5; and 2-year-old Macy.

would have been prohibitively expensive as Edovo broadened its offerings.

Still, that early failure didn't deter him. In fact, it only heightened his interest in improving the lives of prison inmates — perhaps because that interest was planted so early.

In the mid-1990s, his father, Dave Hill, taught psychology in Folsom State Prison in California — a side mission to his “day job” of teaching psychology in community college. He brought excerpts of his prison students' work home to share with Brian and his five siblings. The elder Hill always got students' permission to share their writing, and he selected carefully to help his children feel some empathy for the prisoners without exposing the kids to inmates' more disturbing experiences.

Cross-cultural lessons

Hill said his father's purpose was to show his children the breadth of human cultures and the common humanity that binds them all. To deepen and enrich their Mormon faith, he'd have the family spend evenings with African visitors and Vietnamese refugees, view the protests of those he called “oppressed people,” and visit other religions' sites of worship.

Brian Hill found optimism and hope in the family's religious tourism. “It was important for us to choose,” he recalled. “My dad actually took us to other Christian denominations, Jewish synagogues, mosques. It was also so interesting and important to see how similar the faiths are, how hard so many people are trying to do good and the right thing.”

It seems completely natural that Hill would build his business on a foundation of social improvement. His father said he saw that relentless caring in Brian “from the time he began to talk,” pointing out that his son was always the child who would befriend a lonely classmate — and later become class president and try to make things better for the other kids.

Like his father, Hill is bullish on family life. He and his wife, Callie, have four daughters, ages 2 to 9, and Hill is puzzled by the reluctance of so many of his peers to marry and have children. He even argues an entrepreneurial case for families. He sees raising a family and leading a startup as complementary roles.

“Even to be married at my age seems a little uncommon these days,” he admitted. “I think it's too bad people don't have that experience. I think it's a big miss. It teaches you. It trains you. It teaches empathy. ... You learn a lot of lessons really fast, and you learn not to take yourself too seriously. When you go home, it doesn't matter what you might have done during the day. You've got to get the dishes washed, put the kids to bed and change some diapers,” he said.

“It trains you from an entrepreneurial skill set, both in terms of a willingness-to-take-risks standpoint and also from a figuring-things-out standpoint. It correlates pretty strongly with entrepreneurship. I mean, you build a family, it's the biggest entrepreneurial experiment that you'll do,” Hill said.

In late 2013, immediately after the failed TV experiment, Hill took a new path toward his goal of improving prison-based education. Instead of a single TV feed, he pushed the idea of delivering lessons via individual tablets. "Literally the next week" after the TV failure, "I went to Walmart and bought a tablet," he said. A year later, the first tablet was delivered to prisoners, and the expansion hasn't stopped.

Edovo's growth got a boost in 2017, when it acquired a California company that sells phone service to jails. Hill already understood that in most facilities, money for tablets came from the sizable share of phone-service earnings turned over to each prison.

'Disrupt that industry'

He remembers thinking: "If they're using phone money to buy our tablets, we should just go and disrupt that industry, because communication is another critical part of rehabilitation." And so he acted on that thought.

"We bought a phone company to change that industry up," he said. "That was really the procurement vehicle we needed. We're actually selling communications contracts to correctional facilities. The dollars spent on communications are used on phones, but they also subsidize the tablet and the education software, whether you make a phone call or not."

Including the workers at its Los Angeles-based phone-service subsidiary, Edovo now has about 85 employees, up from 72 in mid-2018. The company's core revenue has doubled, year over year, for several years. There are now 25,000-30,000 Edovo tablets available for prisoners. However, that still leaves 99 percent of the nation's incarcerated population without access to these tablets.


A bottom-line businessman might see 1 percent market share for a popular product as a boon: plenty of room to grow, with a near guarantee of doubling company revenue year after year. Instead, Hill regrets what he sees as a vast waste of human potential.

"For us, it's more anxiety," he said. "That means 99 percent of the people are still watching daytime television. Every day we're not out there working harder, there are people out there wasting their lives away. These (tablets) can change the trajectory of lives."

Hill cited a note from a prisoner who credited his successful parole hearing to Edovo. "That's a person getting years of his life back. We've had people who've gotten back custody of their children. Not to mention learning to read!"

And, of course, they need to learn to make better decisions. That's the heart of the Hill plan for prison reform.

"The key is their learning to make good choices, and their ability to learn to make choices in here isn't good," he said. "We've taken a self-identified poor decision-maker and put him in an environment where he makes no decisions. It puts them in the worst environment for their development possible. So what Edovo is striving to do is to give them choices and reward them for good choices." ■



Hill — here conferring with software engineer Shane Fitzgerald (left) and Tyler Jennings, Edovo's chief technology officer — is happy with the firm's success, but that doesn't mean he's satisfied. "Every day we're not out there working harder, there are people out there wasting their lives away," he says. "These (tablets) can change the trajectory of lives."



The background of the page features a photograph of a whiteboard. At the top, a sign reads "CAREACADEMY". Below the sign, the whiteboard is covered with various icons, including a Wi-Fi symbol, a map, a paperclip, a person with a plus sign, a speech bubble, a share icon, and a phone. A person's hand is visible on the right side, pointing at the whiteboard.

CareAcademy's Helen Adeosun:

A drive for success, a com

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. —

Helen Adeosun made her mark as a striver before she was old enough to drive. At 14, she appeared in a CNN segment on kids and investing, explaining how she followed financial news on mergers and acquisitions and why she believed in saving money. In her early teens, she started a babysitting service. A few years later, she began a lawn-mowing service.

Adeosun's diligence — and her smarts — eventually got her into graduate school at Harvard, but even a degree from that prestigious institution wasn't enough to satisfy her.

pulsion for caring



CEO Helen Adeosun welcomes visitors to the offices of CareAcademy, a firm that provides online instruction to in-home caregivers. The company, which Adeosun co-founded in 2013, now has nearly 200 companies as clients and has served more than 25,000 home-health workers.





Adeosun jokes with Yvan Castelloux (left), CareAcademy's chief technology officer, and Darrien Bush, content and production coordinator. Though born in Tennessee, Adeosun cites a tradition of entrepreneurship that connects her to her ancestral roots in Nigeria. "Entrepreneurship has always been an itch that I have scratched," she says.

Her father, George Adeosun, recalled his puzzlement when he noticed that his daughter wasn't celebrating at the graduation ceremony.

"I asked her how she could be disappointed," Adeosun said. "She said the reason she was disappointed was because the Small Business Administration did not approve her loan request to start a business."

Helen Adeosun, co-founder and CEO of CareAcademy, has overcome her disappointment. The business she founded in 2013 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, produces instruction for home caregivers and makes it available on mobile phones or computer tablets. The CareAcademy lessons offer a smoother, individualized way for caregivers to meet credential requirements. The on-demand curriculum also makes training easier for employers, many of whom face a dual crunch: hiring and retaining employees in a high-turnover field at the same time an aging population propels a growing demand for their services.

CareAcademy now has nearly 200 home-health companies as clients. Twenty-five thousand home-health workers have completed at least one of the lessons or continuing-education classes it offers. Revenue in the last three months of 2018 grew by 25-50 percent compared with the corresponding months in 2017, Adeosun says. The latest venture: In January, CareAcademy began a pilot program to certify home-health aides.

Mining her experience

Adeosun, a 34-year-old daughter of Nigerian immigrants, explored many fields — including teaching, social work and management — before she launched CareAcademy. She built the company by mining her years of experience as a babysitter, nanny, and home-health worker to create a curriculum of lessons and videos on how to care for people in their homes.

"I say that CareAcademy is actually the confluence of all of those experiences. ... I think it's in my background as the caregiver, as a person who's worked in public policy, as a person who's been an educator," she said.

"For me, entrepreneurship is not about building something that has potential outcomes for wealth or anything like that," she said. Instead, it's a strategy for solving deeply entrenched problems. "The tools that you wield are your influence or your power or money, and I think it's the role of an entrepreneur to use creativity."

Adeosun's story begins long before her birth in Nashville, Tennessee, where her parents lived when they came to the United States to attend Fisk University. She cites a tradition of entrepreneurship on both sides of her family, but that's a huge understatement. A relentless devotion to business has lifted four generations of her family to prosperity, both in Nigeria and the United States.

"The women in my family have had to be entrepreneurs, typically because when Nigeria was colonized and before it was colonized, women supported their families by selling things — goods or wares," Adeosun said.

"That actually continued through my grandparents and

my aunts. Once you learn a trade in a family, that carries on matrilineally, so the women in my family have opened up shops where they are selling khat (an herbal stimulant), where they are selling knick-knacks. My mom went from being a nurse — which really influenced my desire to work in health care — and she's been a real-estate agent, and she's now also opened a store in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship ... was the way my grandmother and grandfather could send my dad to the best schools in Nigeria and to get his education here in the U.S. For me, entrepreneurship has always been an itch that I have scratched throughout my life."

Her father, trained as a pharmacist, was also drawn to

sales. He now works for a Lexus dealership in Roswell, Georgia, near Atlanta. He was initiated early in life.

"I got my start in sales from my mother, back in Nigeria. She owned a textile business. By the time I was 5 years old, she'd already turned me into a salesperson for her. Everybody in the family worked for my mother, the matriarch," he said.

For all the inclinations and family momentum that pointed her toward business, Helen Adeosun explored many paths on the way to CareAcademy. She is an accomplished student, with a wide-ranging curiosity about many topics and the intellectual prowess to delve deeply into all of them.



Adeosun meets with Michelle Hochberg, content and production director (left), and account executive Morgan Rosh in the common area of Workbar, a co-working office space in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the CareAcademy offices are located.

A global perspective

She lived in Nigeria as a toddler and preschooler, long enough for her to learn English and Yoruba simultaneously. Reflecting on these early years, she said they also helped her learn how to move easily among cultures. She learned Spanish as a teen. Then there's Arabic, her fourth language, and one she learned in response to an inner desire — call it a compulsion — to serve.

"My dad and I had many long conversations about how fortunate we are to be in the U.S. And having a degree of access always means we should think about

ways that we are providing access to others and bettering the situation of others — giving back, basically," she said.

Entering the University of Notre Dame in 2003, Adeosun majored in political science and Arabic studies with an eye toward entering the armed services.

"I originally thought I was going to be in the U.S. military, so I initially entered Notre Dame as a candidate for ROTC. That really was not a good fit. I saw it as a really good way to serve, but I was really conflicted about the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. I won't go into that too much," she said. "But I knew that at least





Adeosun, here with co-worker Michelle Hochberg, used her own experiences as a caregiver to inform the CareAcademy curriculum. “In someone’s own home, the person you’re caring for is the expert in their own care, and so is their family,” Adeosun points out. “People don’t give enough credit to the fact that folks do that every day.”

speaking or understanding Arabic, should I become a military officer, would be the first step in bridging a gap or a divide.”

Even after she decided not to join the military, she continued her Arabic studies because she loved the cultural aspects of it. “I’ve been in situations even now where that’s been such a huge asset to build on. . . . It’s not necessarily always literally reading and speaking Arabic, but it’s seeking a deeper understanding of where I’m at and who everyone is in a situation.”

After graduation, Adeosun worked in many positions and places, but all explored different avenues of service: Teaching English to ninth-graders with Teach for America; coordinating 450 volunteers for an environmental conference; organizing political advocacy in support of Teach for America; community organizing in Washington, D.C.

She also ran a group home in Boston for young adults transitioning from homelessness to independent living and later helped implement a new strategy for teaching English as a second language in Boston Public Schools. She juggled much of this work with earning her Harvard master’s degree in education policy and management.

Often during her education, she also worked as a caregiver — sometimes for children, sometimes for the aged. And the challenges that she and her clients faced stuck with her.

“Once you cross the threshold of another person’s home, I think it’s very different from what people realize.

People think, ‘Oh, it’s like being a nurse,’ but as a nurse, you’re more than likely working in a hospital setting or in some setting where you are the professional. . . . In someone’s own home, the person you’re caring for is the expert in their own care, and so is their family. People don’t give enough credit to the fact that folks do that every day, and they’re having to navigate the life of an individual, and I was thinking that no one ever taught me a lot about these things that I was learning to do — learning to ask about someone’s day and making someone feel at ease, that they were in ultimate control of the way in which they were cared for.”

Her reflection on that work sharpened when she took a class in development ventures — entrepreneurial startups — at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

“We were charged with thinking about ideas that could benefit multiple constituencies,” she recalled. “You benefit not only the caregivers, but also those who are cared for and the employers as well. The idea did pretty well in the class; I got an ‘A,’ and all that is good, but it had me wondering whether that was something we could actually make real. And so we launched CareAcademy,” Adeosun said.

For the 2013 launch, she and her co-founder, Dr. Madhuri Reddy, developed 60 units of lessons. Reddy brought clinical expertise and supervised the content of lessons — including instructional videos to view and assessments for caregivers to complete through mobile phones or tablets. Adeosun and Reddy planned each unit so that a

caregiver/student could complete it in 30-60 minutes.

“For us, thinking about ‘Where do we start?’ it was basically fitting pieces of a puzzle together. When you’re an educator, you’re essentially mapping out pieces of the world,” Adeosun said.

“The way we approached CareAcademy was no different. First we said: ‘It’s on the state guidelines and the federal guidelines of what caregivers need to know. How do we match up with competencies? Where do we start? Employers, who are also going to employ our caregivers, are the payers, so let’s make sure this map, this roadmap, makes sense to them,’” she said.

Knowing the customer

Adeosun and Reddy knew that any program simply had to appeal to employers, as they were the ones who would have to pay the cost. Home-health aides earn a median wage of \$11.12 an hour, according to the latest figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Even working full time at that rate, there’s little left after paying living costs to afford continuing education.

But the market for such classes is enormous. There were 2.9 million home-health aides in the U.S. in 2016 —

that’s more than one aide for every 100 adult Americans. And the BLS estimates that there will be another 1.2 million jobs in the field by 2026. That’s a lot of new workers who will need training.

No one knows that better than Kevin Smith, president and chief operating officer of Best of Care Inc., a home-health agency based in Quincy, Massachusetts.

“There are always going to be enough clients. There will always be more clients than we can serve. The challenge is the workforce,” Smith said.

At the beginning of 2018, Smith began offering CareAcademy lessons for his firm’s 400 caregivers, who help more than 1,200 clients in their homes. Before then, caregivers completed their continuing-education requirement through traditional classroom instruction the company offered. Attending those classes was a transportation challenge and a scheduling problem for many caregivers. Now “they complete them way ahead of schedule because people can bang them out so quickly on their phones or computers,” Smith said.

It isn’t just the caregivers who did better. Smith found that taking instruction out of company classrooms and putting it on phones and tablets has freed up higher-skilled, more specialized employees, too. Registered nurses don’t spend time developing and delivering



Kevin Smith is president and COO of Best of Care Inc., a home care agency in Quincy, Massachusetts, that uses CareAcademy instructional materials to train its home-health aides. Smith says the software allows his firm’s 400 caregivers to complete their required continuing-education courses quickly and efficiently.

CareAcademy account executive Morgan Rosh seems untroubled working under Adeosun's watchful eye. Perhaps that's because she knows her boss isn't driven solely by the profit motive. "Having a degree of access always means we should think about ways that we are providing access to others and bettering the situation of others — giving back, basically," Adeosun says.







training. Human-resources staffers aren't forced to chase caregivers and prod them to attend training.

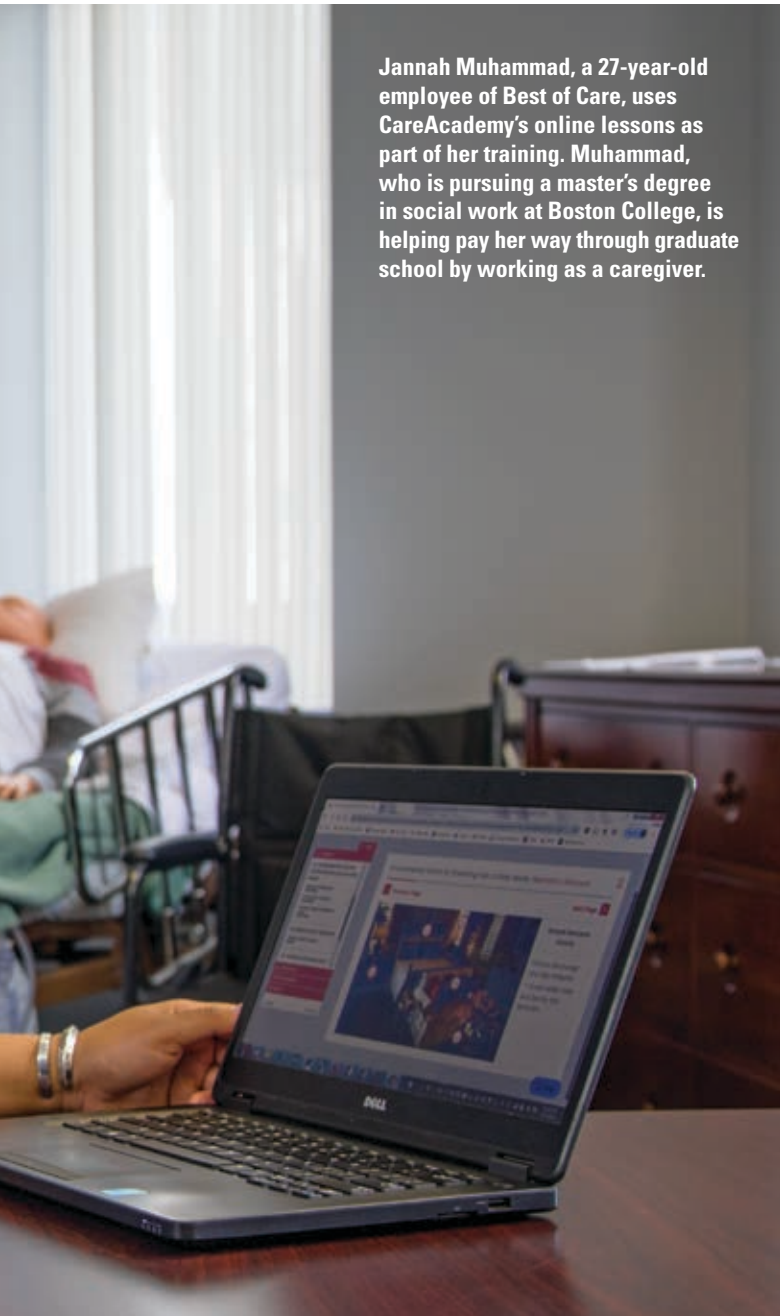
"The previous training programs were always led by an RN who would develop the material and the schedule for the trainings," Smith said. "And the human element of that was essential, because the face-to-face element of learning was critical, especially for a lot of our aides who speak English as a second language.

"But the flip side of that human element is that people were late. Sometimes people didn't show up. It wasn't always the best use of our time to have a nurse committed to three hours of training only to have some aides come in an hour or two hours late and miss the first half of the class. Then to try to get those people caught up on an individualized basis is another time suck.

"And on top of that, once those classes were completed, my human resource people were then gathering up the attendance rosters, tabulating who was there, how many hours they were there and how many hours they had left to complete on their annual training requirements. The lift for HR became more and more significant as the volume of aides grew," Smith said.

One of the aides who trains with CareAcademy materials is Jannah Muhammad, 27. As Adeosun herself did, Muhammad is helping pay her way through graduate school by working as a caregiver. Muhammad, who is pursuing a master's degree in social work at Boston College, has an entrepreneurial streak as well; she hopes someday to direct a nonprofit or nongovernmental organization, or perhaps own her own home-health company.

Jannah Muhammad, a 27-year-old employee of Best of Care, uses CareAcademy's online lessons as part of her training. Muhammad, who is pursuing a master's degree in social work at Boston College, is helping pay her way through graduate school by working as a caregiver.



She worked as a caregiver during her undergraduate years, so the required training is mainly review for her. Still, she finds it valuable.

"CareAcademy has been very useful at refreshing some of the skills I've had over the years. It helps me make sure I'm not forgetting anything and I'm doing the job to the best of my abilities," she said.

"I'm definitely able to go at my own pace. I'm able to read up on things, or if I know something, I can go through it pretty quickly rather than sitting in a class. If I need to refresh myself, I can go back to a quiz I've taken already and re-review."

The kind of things Muhammad finds herself reviewing might seem trivial, but they're hugely important to caregivers and clients. An example Muhammad offered:

"One of my clients was using a bedpan, so I went back to see which way to position the bedpan. If you don't do it right, it's not good."

Trivial details? There's no such thing when providing personal care for people who can't care for themselves. Home-health workers not only cross thresholds of homes. These workers — who often are immigrants without advanced educations or middle-class security — often cross boundaries of religion, race, status, and language. Some of the instruction Adeosun has created for CareAcademy is designed to help them cross those thresholds more confidently.

The first class CareAcademy published was on professionalism and communication. Among its lessons, it spells out actions a home-health worker ought to take when first meeting a client.

Little things matter a lot

"In the first 15 minutes, I'm wiping my feet on your mat and asking you if it's OK if I wear my shoes, because I'm deferring to you in your space," Adeosun said. "I'm shaking your hand. I'm introducing myself by my first name. I'm also wearing a name tag, because I'm brand-new, and I don't want you to struggle to remember my name. The first time we meet, I'm going over to the individual to introduce myself, making sure they're comfortable."

That's only the beginning of her list, but it shows the depth of detail that helps Adeosun sell her curriculum to home-health companies and, indirectly, to the thousands of aides who take CareAcademy classes.

No one has influenced the development of that sales savvy more than her father, she said.

"I learned so much of how I enter a room and shape people's desire to be a part of what we're doing here at CareAcademy through him and by watching him and the coaching from him on how you talk to people — the art of selling, essentially," she said.

He recalled some specific coaching he gave his daughter early in her career.

"She would ask me questions about 'What if a person says no? What do you say?' When she was a teenager! I explained to her that no doesn't mean no, it just means that they need more information. If you push further and give them more information, maybe no is not no," he said.

He seemed surprised that she credits him for these subtle touches, but maybe it's not surprising. He said that, as a child, his daughter did much more listening than speaking.

"She would just come to my business with me, and she would observe. When she was young, people thought she was mute, because all she did was observe," he said.

Since then, Helen Adeosun has found her voice, many times over in many arenas. Now she uses that voice to help entry-level health-care workers find the words — and knowledge and techniques and gestures and cultural cues — that equip them for the job of caring. ■



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