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# Thirty Years And Thriving

By India Supera

## Feathered Pipe Ranch's Tips For Success

**A**s Director of the Feathered Pipe Foundation for the past thirty years, I'm happy to say that we've survived bears, bureaucracy, forest fires, midnight takeovers – ask me sometime, it's a great story – and much more. I attribute our success to the application of the principles of yoga to business. Our reputation for ethical behavior, kindness and acceptance has drawn a community of friends and supporters to whom we owe our popularity and continued success. The tremendous goodwill we've built is really what has saved us time after time. Through the years, we've had to depend on our vendors for credit, hold fundraisers after an office fire and call on the National Guard for sandbags to contain a flood. We have a strong local community and friends everywhere in the world.

Our vision was to create an educational center that would influence future world leaders. Imagine how much better the world would be if the Council on Foreign Relations met in a circle in pigeon pose! From the beginning, we knew we wanted to focus on yoga, but we didn't know where the yogis were. To find them, we helped to found Yoga Journal, the Holistic Life University and The California Yoga Teachers' Association. From these efforts, we found the teachers and students we needed to staff and fill our workshops. We look for new, up and coming teachers and work with them on a shared risk basis, helping them acquire the popularity they deserve. Because of this, our



teachers are tremendously loyal to us. Most of our referrals come from teachers and students.

Advice I would give to anyone starting a yoga retreat center or yoga school: You must have business skills; you must know the accounting, even if you don't do it yourself. Hire people who share your values. We've always been willing to take a risk in hiring young people with good hearts, even when they arrive with nose rings, rough language and sketchy work histories. One of those kids is now the President of our Board of Directors. Others own their own businesses, are raising families, or are world travelers. Speaking of which, we strongly encourage world travel for young people. There's

nothing like spending time in another culture to illuminate your own biases.

Always give more than your clients expect. The following quote from one of our guests sums up what I feel makes us unique. "My Feathered Pipe experiences have trained me as a yoga practitioner and teacher, and helped me become a better business owner. All this is wonderful, but there is something more. There is something in the air at Feathered Pipe Ranch that seems to make you fall in love with everyone. Friendliness and joy seem to spill out everywhere. The beauty of the surroundings and the care given by the staff make us feel not only welcomed, but loved."


We offer small classes with the best



teachers in a pristine and beautiful setting. Organic food and a whole foods diet have always been important to us. We do everything we can to satisfy special diets, including that of the guest who specified: "Must have beer and pizza every day." We go the extra mile for our guests, accompanying them to doctor's appointments, sharing clothes when their bags don't arrive, continually looking for ways to add to their experience here.

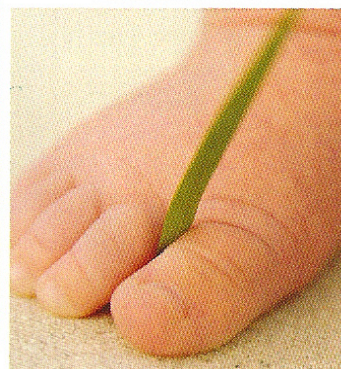
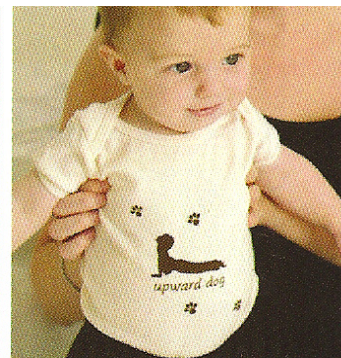
In 1985, we began offering traditional Native American sweat lodges conducted by the late Cree Elder Pat Kennedy. Many people have been touched and changed by those sweat prayers, which are now conducted by Pat's own students. This summer we were fortunate to host a group of visiting Tibetan thangka painters. The Tibetans made new friends, and the yogis took home beautiful thangkas.

The Feathered Pipe Foundation could not survive on just what the Ranch produces. Once we knew what worked here, we were able to take it elsewhere – tours to India, Peru and Myanmar and yoga workshops in Mexico and the Bahamas. At each site, we strive to recreate the feeling of the Ranch as much as possible. For instance, our travel clients bring duffel bags full of school supplies, used clothes and toys to give away to local children. Those bags return home filled with the works of local artisans.

As our dear friend and mentor, Dr. Bernard Jensen once advised, "Conduct your life in such a way that any religion would have you." I would say, conduct your business in the same way. 

*India Supera is the Founder and Executive Director of the Feathered Pipe Foundation. The mission of the Feathered Pipe Foundation is to provide educational programs and experiences in a nurturing environment where people can learn to enrich their minds, bodies and spiritual well-being, and from these endeavors gain resources to further humanitarian efforts and to preserve endangered cultures and traditions.*

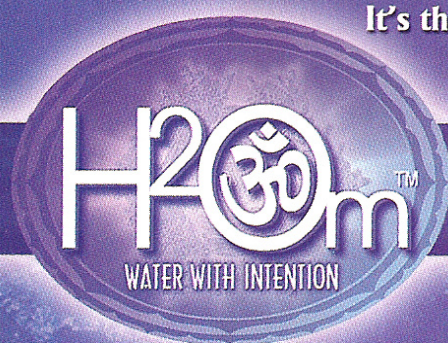
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