



## Graduates make their marks as entrepreneurs

Maine Law graduates are quick to point to the value of legal education and training to spur new economic activity that positively impacts the workforce and the market in Maine.

By Peter Weed

The life of an entrepreneur is one of hard work and risk coupled with the potential of high rewards and high satisfaction in creating a viable business. Ask an entrepreneur about his or her career decision and you get responses containing phrases such as “accepting risk,” “controlling my fate,” “sense of accomplishment,” and “expect some failures.”

It’s a tough career, and entrepreneurs, including Maine Law graduates, are quick to point to the value of legal training that provides such valuable skills as the ability to negotiate contracts, navigate regulations, and think critically.

One Maine Law graduate who has built a Portland-based champagne importing and distribution company explains how his legal education helped him guide his business.

As Thomas Brems ’17, founder and owner of Victorieux Champagne, explains, “Engaging in the import and distribution of alcohol, particularly a branded alcohol,

necessitates the ability to navigate complex legal structures of international trade, regulatory compliance, securities, the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC), contracts, business, insurance, tax, and trademark law.”

Brems was helped along his career path by another Maine Law graduate and entrepreneur, John Bride ’64, who established the Bride Family Foundation Entrepreneurial Fellowships. The Bride Fellowships are designed to encourage and assist first- and second-year students who plan to use their legal education and training in business – particularly entrepreneurial endeavors that will build economic growth in Maine.

Bride, who now lives in Corral de Tierra, California, forged a career as a communications executive and entrepreneur. He says the establishment of the fellowship was a “way to give back to a school that took a chance on me. The Law School was instrumental in putting me in the right place.”

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**Nicole Bradick '06**  
**Founder/CEO, Theory and Principle**

**What is your current work and what skills are important?**

I am the founder and CEO of a company that works with legal industry clients globally to build innovative web and mobile applications. For my work, the most important skills are the soft skills – the ability to gain rapport with clients, empathize with users, and work with a range of employees, from developers to designers, and more.

**What do you like best about life as an entrepreneur?**

I love what I do so much. I love building things, I love having a meaningful impact on the legal system, and I love controlling my own destiny.

**What's the greatest challenge?**

There are a ton of challenges, but the most important and hardest one is growing and managing a team of happy, hard-working employees.

**How did Maine Law prepare you for your career?**

I couldn't do what I do without a strong foundation of legal knowledge. The value that my company offers our clients is in our subject matter expertise and understanding of the industry.

**Why should Maine Law students consider careers as entrepreneurs?**

Especially in Maine, there's a historically defined range of options for careers for lawyers. Starting your own business gives you the ability to shape your career and be creative in how you want to use your law degree.

## Bride Family Foundation Entrepreneurial Fellowship Recipients (Since 2010)

### 2018

- > **Andrew McLean '20**, Arctic & North Atlantic Business Opportunities
- > **Will Sedlack '19**, Calendar Island Mussel Company

### 2017

- > **Brooke Webb '19**, SunRaise Investments, LLC

### 2016

- > **Thomas Brems '17**, Victorieux Champagne

### 2015

- > **Thomas Brems '17**, Victorieux Champagne
- > **Sage Friedman '17**, One-on-One Tool Box

- > **Krystal Williams '17**, AllergyAmulet

### 2014

- > **Nicholas Kline '16**, DemerBox LLC

### 2013

- > **Caitlin Kellner '14**, Harbor Technologies
- > **Julien Guerard '15**, AutoForo
- > **Tory Bell '15**, Fluent Global Consulting

### 2012

- > **Elizabeth Albers '14**, Turtle Love Co.
- > **Jeanette Durham '13**, Azaria
- > **Elisa Ellis '14**, A Fresh Start

### 2011

- > **J. Casey McCormack '12**, Salt Bay Company, LLC
- > **Mackenzie Simpson '12**, The Landing at Pine Point
- > **Zachary Parker '12**, Pursued a creative works agency for local artists and authors

### 2010

- > **Thomas Bergeron '11**, Maine International Trade Center
- > **J. Casey McCormack '12**, J.B. Brown
- > **Adam Swanson '12**, Presque Isle Rejuvenation Committee

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His connections to the school run deep. He is on Maine Law's Board of Visitors and his son Christopher '01 is also a Maine Law graduate.

In addition to building such skills as understanding the intricacies of contracts, Bride says his Maine Law degree "gave me confidence and provided me with a 'ticket' for credibility and provided negotiating skills."

While at Maine Law, a classmate of

Bride's made a connection for him with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Bride, who had dreamed of a career in the broadcast industry, became a staff attorney at the FCC before going into the private sector, where he proceeded to build television and radio stations that are still thriving.

Through his career, Bride has enjoyed "being responsible and answering to only myself for failures but spreading success to all who participated in the endeavors. (As an entrepreneur) rather than solving other

people's problems you create and develop economic opportunities of lasting value."

To date, the Bride Fellowship has supported the entrepreneurial endeavors of 35 law students.

These law students/entrepreneurs have disrupted the marketplace by, among other innovations, establishing a record label; developing mobile applications; forming a boutique consulting firm to assist small businesses expand their operations into international markets; and forming a start-up real estate investment company. **ML**



## Ben Birney '13

**Director of technology, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research**

### What is your current work and what skills are important?

In August, I joined the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research as its director of technology. The position requires a mixed skill set of regulatory and risk awareness, policy setting, management, and hands-on technical knowledge. Before that, I started two law firms and served in upper management for a streaming media company in New York. Those positions mainly required audacity.

### What do you like best about life as an entrepreneur?

I exercise relentless creativity in my work. Without that as part of my personal and professional life, I would be deeply unhappy.

### What's the greatest challenge?

The greatest challenge is not to put food on the table or to pay the bills. It is to try big, wonderful, extraordinary tasks while knowing that you will probably fail. To face the near certainty of failure and still make the attempt, and then to live with pride in yourself afterward is the greatest triumph of the entrepreneur.

### How did Maine Law prepare you for your career?

Maine Law taught me how to think and write without compromise.

### Why should Maine Law students consider careers as entrepreneurs?

Don't consider a career as an entrepreneur. It's a lousy career. The hours stink, there's no health insurance, and, unless you get very lucky, the pay is rotten. You can have a joyful, colorful, honorable career with absolutely no entrepreneurship in it. Be an entrepreneur if it's the only way to live with yourself.



## Merritt Carey '99

**Consultant, scallop farmer, blogger, and more**

### What is your current work and what skills are important?

My work is extraordinarily varied. I'm a consultant, a scallop farmer, and I write a blog. My favorite days are working on the water. With a group of fishermen, I helped found the Maine Aquaculture Co-op, Maine's first aquaculture co-op. Last year the Co-op sold the first farm-raised scallops landed in Maine. I also worked with local fishermen and Luke Holden, Founder of Luke's Lobsters, to set up Maine's first vertically integrated fisherman's co-op, the Tenants Harbor Fisherman's Co-op. Important skills include: communication, creative thinking, flexibility, and perseverance.

### What do you like best about life as an entrepreneur?

The ability to be creative with my work and to follow my heart with respect to how I earn a living.

### What's the greatest challenge?

Those who work for themselves know this truth: you earn every penny.

### How did Maine Law prepare you for your career?

Going to Maine Law, and practicing for a few years, helped me hone my critical and analytical thinking skills as well as my ability to dive into details. I rely on my legal knowledge daily – both consciously and subconsciously.

### Why should Maine Law students consider careers as entrepreneurs?

Unless you're born with a proverbial silver spoon, you'll spend a lot of time over the course of your life working. In my view, it's critical to find work that's meaningful and (mostly) enjoyable. You learn a lot about who you are and what you're made of when you take a chance in life and find your own path.



## Thomas M. Brems '17

**Owner, Victorieux Champagne**

### What is your current work and what skills are important?

Victorieux Champagne selects, imports, and markets a portfolio of grower champagne varieties from wine grower-producers in Champagne, France. Engaging in the import and distribution of alcohol, particularly a branded alcohol, necessitates the ability to navigate complex legal structures. Our company navigates federal and state alcohol compliance regulations on a daily basis. It is also helpful to become familiar with the art of champagne tasting — but that is the fun part!

### What do you like best about life as an entrepreneur?

Building an idea into a reality. Doggedly navigating a real-world challenge through countless hours of careful and attentive care to transfigure passion into income. There is never a dull moment in the gravity or potential risk of the venture, and the opportunity gained is the potential of independence and prosperity. The pride of

and intrinsic value felt watching something I dreamed about become my reality is something I cherish deeply.

### What's the greatest challenge?

Risk. You will be told that you will not succeed. Others will not see your path as you do and will not understand the risk. You must remain true to your vision to birth innovation.

### How did Maine Law prepare you for your career?

Maine Law, through the Bride Family Foundation Entrepreneurial Fellowship, provided me the opportunity to develop my business and network within Maine's alcohol industry. I learned about the basics of tax, the UCC, intellectual property, insurance, and administrative law in my courses as well.

### Why should Maine Law students consider careers as entrepreneurs?

Being an entrepreneur can provide a challenging lifestyle that allows independence and the ability to set one's own goals. Maine Law students are well prepared by the Law School's curriculum to approach and solve the real-world puzzles of compliance, law, and business.