

Business

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Enough isn't enough

By Chris O'Brien

Imagine this: You're stuck at a salary that puts you in the top 10 percent income bracket. But you long to vault into the top 1 percent. How?

Toby Hecht and the Aji Network say they can help.

Hecht, 53, is a serial entrepreneur who has run a computer distribution business and a series of dance studios along with his wife. So 13 years ago, he started the Aji Network to impart the knowledge and wisdom he gained to business professionals who want to grasp an even higher rung on the economic ladder.

“As outrageous as the top 10 percent income is, people who are actually earning it go, ‘This isn't as much as I thought it was.’”

“Aji” refers to an old Chinese game. It's said that the winner has good “aji” -- or power or influence -- while the loser has bad “aji.”

The Aji Network has two levels of courses. The first is a two-year course for business people who want to make the jump from just being among the top 10 percent of income earners -- people making over \$80,000 a year -- to the top 5 percent or even the top 0.1 percent with annual income of \$150,000 to \$760,000. Hecht, who describes himself as a “fairly high performance guy,” also teaches another class strictly for those already in the top 1 percent.

While Aji is based in Sunnyvale, the classes are held around the country. They consist of a series of three-day seminars and 17 assignments that are done over a two-year period. Hecht teaches a professional philosophy that's he's developed through the more than 200 papers he's written.

“People get an education,” Hecht said. “There's no motivation. No training. We're not Tony Robbins.”

Instead, they get what Hecht describes as “uncommon knowledge” that will give them an advantage. Part of the attraction for students is simply to be in the company of other high achievers, Hecht said.

To enhance their leadership skills, they also get training in tai chi. While Hecht has been a student for many years, he brings in a grand master to teach the sessions.

“We make judgments about people from how they move their bodies,” Hecht said. “Tai chi helps them move powerfully under stress.”