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Matt Haggman: Building Miami entrepreneurs at Knight Foundation

Written by Susan Danseyar on June 9, 2015

Having been a journalist here almost 10 years, it seemed a custom-fit assignment for Matt Haggman to spend his first four months as Miami program director of the Knight Foundation focused solely on talking to people to discover what was needed here.

He learned of the opportunity to use entrepreneurship as a tool to build community and then launched the foundation's initiative aimed at connecting and propelling Miami's emerging entrepreneurs and startups.

Mr. Haggman explains that fostering Miami as a place for entrepreneurs who are initiating ventures and ideas leads to vital community benefits such as talent retention and attraction as well as a greater sense of possibility.

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Knight, he said, can be helpful in trying to build an ecosystem, using foundation dollars to create the resources, places, mentor and funder networks to assist entrepreneurs in building the ideas they wish to pursue.

Moving forward, Mr. Haggman said the foundation is thinking that to be really successful, it has to be about all of Miami. The more the foundation can create the opportunity for people of different backgrounds, biographies and experiences to collide with others, he said, the richer the set of the ideas will be and – ultimately – the greater the impact.

Mr. Haggman is also co-chair of the Beacon Council's One Community One Goal initiative, a communitywide effort to create an environment for significant higher-paying job creation in seven target industries.

He said he thinks the biggest success so far is the launch of the talent development network, and the challenge ahead is to be focused on what One Community One Goal chooses to pursue, how and when.

Miami Today reporter Susan Danseyar interviewed Mr. Haggman at the Knight Foundation office in Brickell.

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