

### Profile: Bob Hobbs Jr.

**Title:** President and chief executive  
**Company:** Bob Hobbs Jr. & Associates  
**E-mail:** bobjr@bobhobbsjr.com  
**Age:** 35  
**Residence:** Paradise Valley  
**Spouse:** Michelle  
**Children:** Trey, 7; Kelsey, 5  
**Education:** Arizona State University, bachelor's degree in communication.  
**Associations:** Sun Angel Advisory Council, Arizona State University President's Club, Arizona State University Sol Devils, Arizona State University Alumni Association, Alexis de Tocqueville/United Way, former HomeBase Youth Services ambassador, Sigma Chi White Trust Level contributor, past member of Scottsdale Active 20/30, Paradise Valley United Methodist Church, Paradise Valley Country Club, Aspen Valley Golf Club in Flagstaff

**What is one thing about you that would surprise most people?**  
"My daily battles with obsessive compulsive disorder. I hide it well!"

**What do you consider your greatest personal or professional achievement?** "Taking a leap of faith and leaving the comfortable surrounding of my family's 57-year-old business to follow my passion and explore the unfamiliar waters of helping others live life with hope, vision and passion."

**What was your greatest mistake, either personally or professionally?**  
"Waiting 20 years to tell my friends and co-workers about my battles with obsessive compulsive disorder."

**What historical figure, living or dead, would you like to meet, and why?** "Howard Hughes. He did not play by traditional rules when it came to living his life. He explored new ways of doing things. He was an innovator. He also battled obsessive compulsive disorder."

**What life advice can you offer young college graduates about to start their careers?** "Don't wait for the right opportunity to get started. Life isn't about finding yourself. It's about creating yourself."

**Favorite quote?** "The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."  
— Nelson Mandela

**Describe a moment in your life when you have to have the most courage:** "When you follow your passion and others try to tell you it cannot be done."

**Who are your heroes in real life?**  
"Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah, a Ghanaian physically challenged international cyclist; the late Jimmy Valvano, North Carolina State University basketball coach who died of cancer in 1993, and Michelle Hobbs, my lovely bride."



JIM POULIN/THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

# MAN IN THE MIRROR

## Valley man speaks candidly about his struggles and passions

BY MIKE PADGETT  
mpadgett@bizjournals.com

There were days when Bob Hobbs Jr. felt like a fractured image in a broken mirror. All the pieces were there, but they didn't quite line up.

In early April, this one-time future president of Naumann/Hobbs Material Handling Inc., one of Arizona's leading private companies, will be the headliner of an event officially kicking off his new business career. Instead of following in the footsteps of his father, Naumann/Hobbs President Robert Hobbs Sr., the younger Hobbs is launching an inspirational speaking business.

His adventure started about a year ago. He was fed up with being unhappy, so he took a long look at himself in the mirror, resigned from his father's company and headed for the speaking circuit with his own company, Bob Hobbs & Associates Inc.

In his presentations, he will talk about his personal challenges with obsessive compulsive disorder, or OCD. His goal is to help people understand that overcoming personal challenges, like OCD or a fear of failure, can help people reach their full potential.

"I try to tell people that if they do know what their passion is and if they're not headed toward it or they're afraid of trying it, then they're probably not doing the right thing," he says. "If you knew you could not fail, would you be doing what you're doing today?"

Heavy words. But then, Hobbs has been carrying some heavy weight. It wasn't until a year ago that Hobbs, now 35, told friends and colleagues that he has suffered from OCD since he was about 15. He kept his disorder secret by using his "game face," referring to a practiced look to hide anxiety. "I remember looking in the mirror and

seeing the difference between the guy who has it under control and the guy who doesn't have it under control," Hobbs says.

Experts believe OCD afflicts about 3 percent of the U.S. population. Some of the behavior is linked to a chemical imbalance related to the pituitary gland. Hobbs eventually found relief in therapy and Prozac.

Endorsing Hobbs' new business venture are Doug Ducey, chairman and CEO of Cold Stone Creamery Inc.; Jeffrey Trent, president and scientific director of the Translational Genomics Research Institute in Phoenix; and Karl Eller, chairman and CEO of The Eller Co.

"He's got a lot of passion in this, and it comes through in his presentation," Ducey says.

Eller says Hobbs is showing courage by trading his corporate future for personal happiness.

"The young man has given up a pretty good future with his father and has become a true Christian, and he has a passion to make peoples' lives better," Eller says.

Hobbs' father was surprised by his son's decision, but he is giving his total support.

"It's his passion and it's what he really wants to do," Hobbs Sr. says. "Our whole family is very supportive. Bob is a very bright young man, and when he gets passionate about something, nothing really surprises me."

If you saw the 1997 movie, "As Good As It Gets," you might remember Jack Nicholson's portrayal of a man with OCD. Among other things, he was obsessed with washing his hands and sitting at a certain table in a restaurant.

Hobbs' situation was like that. His behavior started with the light switches. He felt compelled to switch the lights off and on

five times before he left his room. Soon, it was eight times, 12 times, even 30 times.

"I can't really explain why, I just have to do it," Hobbs says.

As time went on, Hobbs couldn't decide what to wear. That isn't unusual for teenagers, but Hobbs' indecisions were extreme. He believed that if he wore certain colors, something horrific would happen to his family or friends. Some days, he had so much trouble deciding what color to wear, he couldn't leave his closet.

At one point, despite therapy, Hobbs suffered panic attacks and irregular heartbeats, even though his health was excellent.

Today, Hobbs is able to better control his episodes, and he leads a relatively normal life as he begins touring to share his story with others.

Hobbs' first big event was last September at the Scottsdale Civic Center. His next major engagement will be April 5 at Dodge Theatre in Phoenix. Hobbs is the headliner of his "Hope, Vision, Passion Inspirational Experience," and he is sharing the stage with three other professional speakers with their own challenges: quadriplegic athlete, actor and author Jim MacLaren; author, adventurer and cancer survivor Alan Hobson; and double amputee and trained physician Ronan Tynan, a member of The Irish Tenors.

Some say it takes courage to walk away from an inherited path to corporate presidency of a third-generation Arizona company. Hobbs sees his decision differently.

"I feel a bit of a calling, if you will," he says. "This inner voice is telling me this is the right thing to be doing. I fully plan on reaching a lot of people and being a household name."