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Three executives explore the meaning of entrepreneurship at Spark event

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Rick Kupchella moderated a panel of entrepreneurs who shared stories of success during an event hosted by the Sabes JCC

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Inspiration was flowing at the Jan. 22 Spark event hosted by the [Sabes Jewish Community Center](#). After an hour of cocktails and networking, A few hundred people took their seats at the Muse Event Center in Minneapolis to listen to three successful business executives tell their stories, and explain the true meaning of entrepreneurship.

Rick Kupchella, CEO of [BringMeTheNews](#), moderated a panel of speakers including [Spark Networks](#) CEO Greg Liberman, [Tremendous!](#) founder Colleen Needles Steward, and [2 Gingers Whiskey](#) founder Kieran Folliard.

In his keynote address, 41-year-old Liberman explained that though he's never started a company of his own, he still considers himself to be an entrepreneur.



Liberman's career choices, though not all cohesive, led him to Spark Networks — the parent company of online dating giants like [Jdate.com](#) and [ChristianMingle.com](#). A law degree from University of Chicago, where he had President Barack Obama as a teacher, helped him land various corporate attorney jobs early in his career. A constant desire to be in operations helped him get a job as Spark Networks' general council, where he was promised to have decision-making power. He was quickly promoted to president and, in 2011, CEO.

Liberman said that curiosity, community, a good team, and learning quickly from mistakes made him successful.

"People don't just perform jobs, they shape organizations," he said. "It's not just about 'build it and they will come.' You have to build it well."

Folliard held the crowd captive with a story of his Irish upbringing, and his inspirational father who instilled in him good work ethic. Being an entrepreneur, he said, is "about knowing exactly who you are." A true Irishman, Folliard dove into the restaurant business in the mid-1990s. After founding [The Local](#), [The Liffey](#), [Cooper](#), and [Kieran's](#), Folliard decided to test his new whiskey called 2 Gingers in his pubs. The brand took off and was sold to Beam in 2012. Through his successes he comes back to one of his father's mottos: "If you don't want to do it right, don't do it at all."

Needles Steward talked about creating the right work culture and the importance of hiring the right people.

After spending years as a news anchor for WCCO, Needles Steward got the entrepreneurship bug when she realized that she wanted to tell stories that were longer than one minute. She founded Tremendous! Entertainment in 1995 in order to share captivating stories with the world. Her company is the name behind award winning programs like [Bizarre Foods](#) and Tiger Hunt.

"We are all disciples of the kind of place we want to work in," she said. "The right people, focus, and having a plan have made all the difference."

**Image of Kieran Folliard, Colleen Needles Steward, Rick Kupchella, and Greg Liberman via [BringMeTheNews Facebook page](#).*

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