

Educating Tomorrow's Leaders

Unistream teaches young people to define and achieve their goals.

By Meredith Price

Before entering the Unistream entrepreneurial business program, Daniel Bashah never missed any of his favorite TV programs. Now, idly watching TV is a thing of the past. "I didn't handle priorities well at all, but after three years in Unistream, I've grown up," says the soft-spoken 17-year-old who was born in Ethiopia and immigrated to Israel at the age of four.

Unistream was a "life-changing experience." It improved Daniel's self-confidence, taught him how to prioritize and how to lead, but above all, it helped him understand what he really wants out of life. Soon, he begins his army service. "My heroes today are those who help the community," he asserts. Daniel's classmate, Eliran Torgeman, 17, says the experience has not only given him self-confidence, but it has spurred his interest in a whole range of new things – like the stock market."

The Unistream entrepreneurial program began six years ago with one pilot center. Today, there are eight branches across the country. The non-

profit organization was funded and conceptualized by Rony Zarom, a successful Israeli entrepreneur and founder of several prominent high-tech companies. After serving as a commander in the army, he completed his higher education in the US and then returned to Israel.

With his fortune secure, Rony started looking into ways to contribute to the community. He decided that educating youth in low-income, underprivileged areas, who might not otherwise be exposed to the business world, would be an ideal way.

Unistream focuses on teaching leadership and business skills with the idea that graduates build their own successful futures and then give back to the community. "The future of Israel is in young people. Invest in them and the paybacks benefit everyone," says Rony. "What they learn at Unistream will be with them for the rest of their lives."

Unistream is a rigorous three-year program, Daniel and Eliran were part of a group of 18 students who designed a product of their own – a pillow for car windows that people

can sleep on. They created their own company and developed it into a full-scale production line.

Unistream counselors shepherded them through the whole process and helped them with marketing. "Any profits go to the class below to help them get their company started," says Eliran. Beyond forming their own production companies, the Unistream students are also responsible for managing community service projects that benefit low-income residents.

Both Eliran and Daniel agree that Unistream has opened new doors and challenged their personal growth in unexpected ways. "I traveled to England as a counselor for a group of scouts this summer after matriculation," says Eliran. "It's something I'd never have done." Daniel says frankly. "At the start of the program, I didn't really understand what I was getting into. Now, my future looks completely different. I know what I want and I know how to get it." ♦

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