

A man of many...

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Photo: José Grisales

job offerings, etc. "I was excited with the idea of working at a TV station, even though at first, there was no equipment; only offices," he explains.

Meanwhile, Knobbe decided to become an intern; he also trained on camera and editing. With two years working at the station, he began to report for the first local news show in the Bronx, BXNY, which Bronxnet premiered on July 1993. At one time, Knobbe was covering a drug bust in a local store on the eastside of the Bronx. "I was fighting for a position with a CBS correspondent, who kept pushing his camera guy in front of me because I had a better spot. So, I took my camera and moved in front of him," he remembers. "The internship was a great opportunity, and I took advantage of it by plunging myself into it. I got absorbed by it; I focused on it and did it with discipline," Knobbe stresses.

Knobbe's cohorts soon took notice of his efforts. "He took everything seriously, whether it was a large or a minor project," says Weiss who worked with Knobbe for about six years. Knobbe has a reputation as something of a perfectionist, however. At one time, he and a group of colleagues went out to the field to get images of a senior citizen (body builder) working out at a gym that would be used for the news show. He would notice that some of his co-workers were shooting wrong. "So, I took the camera," says Knobbe, "and I started to shoot, and some would say 'Oh he's such a perfectionist.'"

When Knobbe and his colleagues got back to the studio, they compared their work. "Their images were shaky and over exposed [too bright], while the shots I took were well composed, looked good visually, and had a nice range of colors," he brags. On occasion, Knobbe has spent more than 36 hours in the editing room for certain projects. For Comedy Rumba, a comedy show

that premiered in 1996 and aired for two years, Knobbe had an entire week to put together the segments and add the graphics to the show, but he did in three days. "I reached a level where I didn't want to stop, but rather finish this project," Knobbe adds.

Knobbe has lived all his life in the Bronx and presently resides in a four-room apartment near Van Cortland Park and the Jerome Park Reservoir. It is in this beautiful park that he ran at a competitive level for the cross-country and now runs every morning for an hour before he goes to work. "It's a good way to prepare myself for a tough day at work...I also love running," he adds. As a Lehman student, Knobbe joined the running team. And in 1995, when Lehman made it to the CUNY Cross-Country Championship, Knobbe contributed to this achievement as the third from his team to reach the lane. "I like to run constantly," says Knobbe, who at work rarely sits all day in his office, but rather constantly moves around the station supervising the departments and attending daily meetings. Furthermore, Knobbe's passion to stay healthy and in physical shape is a serious issue. Presently, he is subscribed to three different gyms around the area. "I love working out and lifting weights... Each facility provides me with a different work-out...What one gym lacks to offer, the others don't," he adds.

Knobbe still harbors aspirations beyond television. "I wanted to create something that entertains people; I wanted to make films. I started to lay the ground work, but ended up having no time, because I was working until late. The advantage was that Bronxnet allowed me to channel a lot of my creative energy." Gradually, Knobbe submerged into his education, jobs and internship, and focused on many Bronxnet projects that were crucial for the company's future. According to Knobbe, he would

spend quality and quantity time for a minimum wage, "but it was an investment and worth the effort."

Likewise, Knobbe is an artist. It is just that lately there is not enough time for him to concentrate on his art work. According to Knobbe, from the walls of his living room and kitchen to those of his hallway and bedroom, he has over twelve works of art—oil on canvas paintings and prints—making his apartment a gallery of its own. "There was a point when I was uncertain if my art work would be exhibited in a gallery... But right now, it is good to see them when I come home," he adds.

The need to be involved, the hunger for success, his clear vision of hard work and his passion for creative ideas along with his personality, gave Knobbe a sense of leadership that would be the key to escalate higher. "He has a multi-faceted personality. He's a good coach, proud of the work we (staff) do; and he always tries to do the best job possible. That makes him a good leader—always willing to get his hands dirty," says Judith Nuñez, production coordinator at Bronxnet, who knows Knobbe for about 4 years. "When we go out to shoots," Nuñez explains, "if there is a shortage of crew and we need someone to fill-in a position, Knobbe will do it. If something needs to be fixed, he will help us do it—knowing that his job was to supervise us."

Soon, Knobbe was asked to produce a performing art series, Bronx Live, which gave birth to very successful pieces including the first created show Poetry Reading in 1994. In Poetry Reading, a show that videotaped poets in a local café, Knobbe implemented the use of multiple cameras to shoot in different angles and make it more visually interesting. At a young age, Knobbe, then 25, saw the need to provide the people with informative programming and entertain a culturally diverse community.

The success of Bronx Live was so obvious that it got some recognition. Through Bronx Live, Knobbe received two Cable ACE awards, a national award for local programming, for "Best Music Series" in 1996. In addition, he got a New York Emmy nomination for "Outstanding Fine Arts Program" (1997) and two Cable ACE nominations for "Comedy/Variety Category" (1997), among others.

From senior producer of special projects to production coordinator of the station, eventually, Knobbe worked his way up and became director of the Creative Services Department of Bronxnet. This department is in charge of creating local programming on studio shows, field shoots and promos, and offers video production serving to Bronx non-profit organizations. Knobbe's duties as head of Creative Services ranged from organizing this department and supervising over 25 employees, to field producing and editing. He was also responsible for increasing revenues and expanding their productions working with non-profit organizations that needed production resources (video profiles) to show what they (companies) do for the community. "I was asked to head up this department—it was a natural thing really because I was already doing it," Knobbe explains. "I had a leadership role:

to mentor and train people; manage money, people and productions. I loved it; it was great," he adds. It was working with these productions that Knobbe along with The Hunts Point Economic Development Corporation created a mini documentary to show the financial progress of the Hunts Point community. Knobbe's production, "Hunts Point: Welcoming a New Economic Era," received the 2002 Hometown Video Festival, an honorable mention for the "Documentary Profile in the Professional category."

For those who wonder if Knobbe's personality outside Bronxnet is similar to his leadership role at work, ask co-workers and they tell you the real deal. Chade Newton, Knobbe's former student, thinks that Knobbe is as active and energetic outside the station as he is at work. "This summer, we had two picnics where we played softball...When it was Michael's turn, he hit the ball so hard that it flew far, and he ran very fast. Although we were surprised, it was something expected for someone who's so dynamic and energetic," says Newton. He believes that as a professor Knobbe has good teaching abilities, "He knows the subject well;" as the executive director of Bronxnet, "he will be successful for he has good ideas and knows the company very well." And as an individual, "Michael is a great person... He's like superman. I don't know if he can fly, but I sure know he's always helping everyone," he adds.

It has been six months or so, since Knobbe has been leading Bronxnet; up until now, there have been changes in the station. On the first week of September, Bronxnet's website was redesigned. "Now we have a more interactive site where people can get more information about who we are and what we do. It is more visually appealing, better organized, and we update it daily," says Knobbe.

But innovations in Bronxnet don't stop here. Along with the website, two new monthly series aired recently.

According to Knobbe, Car Guys, an automobile show that premiered on October 2, provides helpful information on car repairing and/or cases of car accidents.

Where as *Diálogo con el Presidente* or *Dialogue with The President*, which premiered on October 1, allows the Spanish-speaking community to call in to their elected Borough President, Adolfo Carrión, with questions concerning their needs. In addition, in a near future, Knobbe plans to bring to the station some comedy shows.

Furthermore, Knobbe and Bronxnet's dedicated staff are concerned about improving their training facility for students so that they can get hands-on experience while interning at Bronxnet.

"We are going to become a better training ground for students who want to get involved in journalism and media; as well as to provide more job opportunities," explains Knobbe. "Now the challenge is to make this company stronger. We need to enhance what we do in everyday in terms of our programming—the resources we provide to the community and make the station a vehicle for non-profit companies that need the word out of what they do. And we are going to get stronger even through our website," he foresees.