

Work in Social Entrepreneurship (W.I.S.E.)

Interview with Heidi Jannenga

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Tell us about your business and how you got started in social entrepreneurship.

I began my career as a practicing physical therapist, during which I co-founded WebPT, the leading medical records software solution for physical, occupational, and speech therapists. Eventually, I shifted my professional focus and transitioned to working at WebPT full-time. Now, as a member of its board and senior management team, I advise on the company's strategic direction, product innovation, and internal operations, while also advocating for the rehab therapy profession on an international scale. Today, WebPT is the fastest-growing physical therapy software in the country, employing over 800 people and serving more than 100,000 therapy professionals—which equates to more than 50% of the market share.

Last year, WebPT conducted its fifth annual State of Rehab Therapy industry survey—a massive effort that dives into the challenges facing the rehab therapy industry. Of the 6,700 rehab therapy providers who responded to last year's survey, only 2.8% self-identified as Black or African-American and 5.2% self-identified as Hispanic or Latino. Compared to the U.S. population where 12.4% self-identify as Black or African-American and 18.7% self-identify as Hispanic or Latino, representation in the physical therapy industry is totally disproportionate. As a clinician and longtime industry advocate, I recognize that every patient deserves to feel represented by their healthcare

provider, a sentiment that led to the creation of my foundation.

Founded officially in 2019, Rizing Tide seeks to broaden the reach, impact, and accessibility of physical therapy by advancing diversity and inclusiveness in the PT workforce. To that end, the Rizing Tide foundation provides scholarships to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) physical therapy students who are either on the path to earning their Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree or furthering their PT education by attending a residency program.

How does your business contribute to the prevention of illness, injury and disability for underserved populations?

Studies show that people in racial and/or ethnic minority populations are significantly more likely to distrust the healthcare system—often due to lower-quality care or outright discrimination—and when these patients don't trust their healthcare providers, they don't seek out the healthcare that they need. Adding to this issue is the fact that our nation has become more and more racially and ethnically diverse over time, but our physical therapy workforce has not evolved alongside it. A diverse staff of providers who come from all backgrounds and walks of life is better-equipped to provide culturally competent care—and patients are generally more at ease, trusting, and apt to seek out care when they are treated by a provider who looks like them and who they can relate to. Patients should have the opportunity to feel heard and accurately represented by their healthcare providers.

Rizing Tide aims to close the diversity gap in the physical therapy industry by helping more BIPOC students enter the field; we're giving them assistance

¹Dr. Tomeico Faison is a graduate of BU's OTD program and completed a capstone project in social entrepreneurship education. She is the CEO and consultant of community-based businesses in NC (faisonconsulting.com), a faculty member at Duke University and capstone mentor at BU.

they might not normally receive to finish their schooling. This is how we hope to create lasting change in the industry.

These students, who hail from all over the United States, aspire to work with the underserved populations in their cities and communities. Some of these students were inspired to pursue this career path because physical therapy helped them directly—while others watched a skilled PT guide the care of a loved one. Either way, they are all driven to help others through the power of movement.

There are many benefits to physical therapy, including the ability to maximize your movement, reduce musculoskeletal pain, avoid surgery, and recover from and avoid injury—among other things. It's been estimated that 90% of patients who could benefit from physical therapy don't ever receive it. By improving the diversity of physical therapists and thus the accessibility of this method of care, Rizing Tide aims to help decrease this gap.

What factors have contributed to the financial sustainability of your business?

In 2006, I was a leading sports physical therapist and multi-site clinic director who wanted to update the way I managed my dictations and paper documentation. After failing to find a solution that met my needs, I decided to create WebPT, a web-based electronic medical record system. At a time where over 80% of physical therapists were using pen and paper, WebPT helped drive the adoption of technology in the industry. Over the next three years, my cloud-based EMR company grew to be the leading physical therapy software on the market and helped physical therapists become more successful and organized. Since its launch, WebPT has evolved from a lean startup into one of the nation's fastest-growing privately-held companies, serving more than 100,000 therapy professionals worldwide. WebPT's commitment to the mission of helping therapists achieve greatness in practice and its people-first culture has contributed greatly to its success. And as the company has grown, the leadership has worked hard to nurture and preserve its uplifting culture.

How has the financial success of your business allowed you to have a social impact in your community?

As a physical-therapist-turned-tech-entrepreneur who was born to immigrant parents, I have a significant role as a leader and ally in the quest to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in healthcare. Because of my entrepreneurial success, I have the financial resources to support the Rizing Tide Foundation and

further its mission. In addition, due to the foundation's initial success, other individuals and private organizations have reached out and offered us aid. I've already seen that this cause is near and dear to many, and having additional financial support will allow us to support more BIPOC students as they pursue their physical therapy careers.

What advice would you give others who want to become social entrepreneurs?

I suggest analyzing where you would like to create change and research the current needs in that focus area. Talk to individuals who are working on the ground and are actively involved in that cause. That will help you create a factual overview that can inform your decisions moving forward. For example, before I started Rizing Tide, WebPT put out a State of Rehab Therapy report that clearly showed that our nation's diversity was not reflected in our workforce. After cross-referencing this information with data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, I saw years of little-to-no change, and I knew I needed to help create the change in the industry that I wanted to see. Thus, Rizing Tide was born. Rizing Tide is my way of building a better future for physical therapists—for people like me—and giving back to my community. I truly believe that by creating a racially and ethnically diverse workforce, everyone in the physical therapy industry—from providers, to patients, to vendors—wins. This environment doesn't exist today and I want to help change that.



Heidi Jannenga

Dr. Heidi Jannenga, PT, DPT, ATC, is the founder of the Rizing Tide Foundation, which seeks to inspire more diversity and inclusiveness in the physical therapy industry. Each year, Rizing Tide presents scholarships to promising BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) students who are on the path to earning their Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) or furthering their PT education by pursuing a residency program.

In addition, Heidi is a physical therapist and the co-founder and Chief Clinical Officer of WebPT, a nine-time Inc. 5000 honoree and the leading software solution for physical, occupational, and speech therapists. As a member of the board and senior management team, Heidi advises on WebPT's product vision, company culture, branding efforts and internal operations, while advocating for rehab therapists, women leaders, and entrepreneurs on a national and international scale. Since the company launched in 2008, Heidi has guided WebPT through exponential growth. Today, it's the fastest-growing physical

therapy software in the country, employing over 800 people and serving more than 100,000 therapy professionals- equating to an industry leading over 50% market-share.

In 2017, Heidi was honored by Health Data Management as one of the most powerful women in IT, and she was a finalist for EY's Entrepreneur of the Year. In 2018, she was named the Ed Denison Business Leader of the Year at the Arizona Technology Council's Governor's Celebration of Innovation. In addition to serving on numerous non-profit leadership boards, Heidi is a proud member of the YPO Scottsdale Chapter and Charter 100 as well as an investor with Golden Seeds, which focuses on women-founded or led organizations.

Heidi is a mother to her 10-year-old daughter Ava and enjoys traveling, hiking, mountain biking and practicing yoga in her spare time.