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RJ Valentine, BA '69  
CEO, The MBA Group

## The Racer

“The fact of the matter is that most people who go to Suffolk—at least when I went there—were not from the highest economic class,” says Richard Valentine, BA '69. CEO of the MBA Group. “They’ve had to fend for themselves one way or another.” This is a good thing, according to Valentine, who believes that overcoming obstacles builds character and the backbone needed to survive. “As I’ve always said,” he continues, “A hungry dog hunts best.”

Dorchester’s favorite son Richard “RJ” Valentine worked three jobs to put himself through Suffolk—which included working at a slaughterhouse during the day, driving a taxi at night, and tending bar on the weekends. This hard work paid off: the combined revenue of his operational businesses now tops around \$800 million a year.

Valentine became an entrepreneur when he started the MBA (Massachusetts Businessmen’s Association) Group in 1970. “I knew that I didn’t want to work for anyone else,” admits Valentine. “I wanted to build my own company and be in charge.” Recognizing that there was a lack of health insurance coverage for employees in small and mid-level businesses, Valentine’s MBA insurance products filled the void quickly. “MBA now insures over 51,000 companies,” says Valentine.

More than insurance, Valentine’s 18-firm MBA Group provides all kinds of vision, financial services, including helping fund businesses that are under-marketed, under-financed or under-managed. “We’ve had many successes,” says Valentine. “I don’t mean to sound braggadocios, but failure really isn’t an option at the MBA Group.”

Perhaps his most visible success was his Jiffy Lube franchise operation, through which he owned and operated all the Jiffy Lube franchises throughout New England. These included the #1 grossing Jiffy Lube in the world in fact, seven out of the top

10 grossing Jiffy Lube centers in America. Valentine sold the franchise in 1993 to Pennzoil, after having built it up to a \$50 million chain of 30 stores.

Though largely a domestic operation, one of Valentine’s companies imports their automobile parts from Europe, and is thus the most directly affected by changes in the global economy. “The dollar and the euro conflict,” says Valentine. “So that directly affects how we become more competitive and how we have to go offshore to buy some of our parts.”

Starting in 2000, Valentine started F1 Boston, a highly successful corporate conference and entertainment complex in Braintree, MA, complete with two indoor kart race tracks. Unlike the “go-karts” of old, these little race cars can push 40 mph within a few seconds. This unique concept company could only come from the imagination of entrepreneur RJ Valentine, a man whose love of running businesses is only rivaled by his love of racing cars.

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A young 61 year old, Valentine is still racing cars and building businesses and has no intention of slowing up. “I’m just going to keep my peddle to the metal and keep going,” he says. “The fact is that I love what I do. There’s a deal a day somewhere and I want to find it. I’ll either drop dead at my desk or in some car wreck somewhere.”

With this kind of tenacity, it’s no wonder that Valentine has been a success both on and off the track. “Let’s face it,” he concludes. “If you can’t make it in America, you can’t make it anywhere.”