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From issue: **Consulta Previa and Investment** (Spring 2014)

Innovators

Some of our hemisphere's emerging leaders in politics, business, civil society, and the arts.

In this issue:

- [Arts Innovator: Francisca Valenzuela, Chile](#)

- [Civic Innovator: Drew Chafetz, United States](#)
- [Business Innovator: Marco Perlman](#)
- [Political Innovator: Mardoqueo Cancax](#)



Golazo! love.fútbol gives kids a safe space to play. Photo: Estela Maria Vega Trangay.

[Arts Innovator: Francisca Valenzuela, Chile](#)

BY

[Mari Hayman](#)

Singer. Fashion designer. Entrepreneur. At 27, Francisca Valenzuela has already reached the kind of success usually associated with a professionally managed career. But instead of a top agent or a big record label, the San Francisco-born Chilean artist owes her achievements to a team that includes her mother, biochemist Bernardita Méndez, her boyfriend and artistic confidante Vicente Sanfuentes, and a small, committed staff in Chile that has skillfully used social media—including 275,000 Twitter followers and fans known as “*Franáticos*”—to spread the word of her talents.

Valenzuela is one of the most engaging examples of a new generation of artist-entrepreneurs who are controlling their own career paths. “I’m not waiting for someone to come rescue me industry-wise,” Valenzuela says, describing how, when her music took off in her late teens, she and her mother purchased *Business for Dummies* online to understand the fine print in her first contract.

Valenzuela’s early musical success—with a hit single, *Peces* (Fish) in 2006—came after years of performing in talent shows, but she was never “serious” about music until she started performing on the underground jazz circuit in Chile. She eventually dropped out of the Universidad Católica de

Chile, where she was studying journalism, to pursue her burgeoning musical career.

Along the way, she has had two books published, two pop-rock albums that went platinum and gold in Chile, and designed a clothing line for the Chilean brand Foster. Now, Valenzuela develops projects and artistic collaborations through her own company, FRANTASTIC Productions. “We’ve structured an independent enterprise basically run by two people [that’s] competitive with counterparts who have a whole corporate background,” she says proudly.

Valenzuela’s do-it-yourself ethic in the music industry is not the only thing that sets her apart from many of her peers. Valenzuela spent the first 12 years of her life in the United States before the family relocated to Santiago. In fact, Valenzuela’s first book—*Defenseless Waters*, a collection of poems that she published at age 13 about themes ranging from long-lost love to social injustice to nature—was written in English. “When I was young in the Bay Area, everyone seemed to be doing extracurricular activities, sports, painting, nurturing kids,” she recalls.

Valenzuela’s literary background and political convictions have inspired her songwriting in Spanish. The title song of her latest album, *Buen Soldado* (Good Soldier, 2011), focuses on the power dynamic between men and women, and she has been an outspoken advocate of sexual diversity and LGBT rights in Chile, participating in gay rights marches since she was 14.

But as much as her Chilean identity has influenced her creatively, Valenzuela returned to California last fall to take the next step in her entrepreneurial journey. This year, she will perform at Lollapalooza in the U.S., Brazil and Chile—and is partnering with the *Todo Mejora* (It Gets Better Foundation) and Global Shapers of Chile to use her fame as a platform for equality.

“Chile is amazing, but it’s a very small community in terms of who you can learn from and how you can expand,” she says. “It’s great to have a nuclear team, [but] the point of being in L.A. is to meet people and branch out and grow.”

[*View a YouTube video of Francisca Valenzuela in Viña del Mar, Chile in 2013.*](#)

[Back to top](#)

Civic Innovator: Drew Chafetz, United States

BY

[Leani García](#)

View a video interview with Drew Chafetz below.

By the time he was 12, Drew Chafetz had visited six of the world's seven continents, thanks to his parents' determination to expand the family's horizons. That not only spurred him to a lifelong love of travel, but into a career that involved his other passion: playing soccer.

Wherever he went on family vacations, Chafetz enjoyed sharing the joy of the "beautiful game" with other fans around the world. But he also noticed how many of his young peers were forced to play in makeshift conditions that were unimaginable to a child growing up in Washington DC. During his last year in college, while watching Moroccan kids play soccer in an alley divided by a foot-deep cement canal, Chafetz decided he wanted to help.

So after graduating from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2006, Chafetz and a former college teammate, Alfredo Axtmayer, founded a nonprofit soccer organization called [love.fútbol](#), which builds soccer fields around the world using a community-driven development model.

Determined to ensure that young soccer players had a safe space to play, the two co-founders raised \$30,000 through private donations, and another \$25,000 in a joint seed grant from FIFA and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). One of their first projects was in Guatemala, where they

identified three rural communities in need of new soccer pitches. As their ambitions grew, they targeted Brazil. So far, love.fútbol has helped 15 communities build new soccer fields in those two countries, with plans to expand to Colombia, Haiti and Mexico.

View a video interview with Drew Chafetz below.

But what sets love.fútbol apart is its reliance on the initiative and involvement of local leaders. While the nonprofit provides raw material and technical expertise, the individual communities donate the labor and land needed to execute the project. Community investment makes the fields sustainable, says Chafetz, since they are a constant reminder of what local residents have accomplished by themselves.

The organization's model has helped it move beyond traditional philanthropy. After winning the "Sport for a Better World" competition sponsored by Ashoka Changemakers and Nike in 2010, love.fútbol has attracted corporate partners such as Coca-Cola and Odebrecht and is focusing on building more partnerships.

As the nonprofit gains momentum, it's partnering with Ashoka Brazil during the World Cup in June to create a lasting social legacy after the tournament. Love.fútbol has already built four soccer fields in the country, providing a secure place to play for over 4,500 children. The organization has even received the support of Brazilian soccer stars like Marta, Romário and Hernanes.

Chafetz's ultimate goal is to take love.fútbol's development model across the globe. Soccer "calls deeply to people," he says. "It makes them feel human and express themselves, and that's incredibly valuable in people's lives; it's lifesaving." Thousands of aspiring young soccer players in Latin America couldn't agree more.

[Back to top](#)

Business Innovator: Marco Perlman

Brazilian entrepreneur Marco Perlman profited twice from his country's recent decade of sustained economic growth: first as a successful venture capital investor, and then as a risk-taker who turned a longtime hobby — photography — into a transformative eco-enterprise.

A self-professed “technology freak,” Perlman, 40, founded the Brazilian digital photo products and services company Digipix in 2004. At the time, the business-to-consumer market in digital photography was still establishing itself in the United States—and was a complete novelty in Brazil. Inspired by the idea of “mass customization,” Digipix enables consumers and businesses to print their own high-resolution, personalized photo albums and pictures, which are then delivered to their homes or offices.

Since securing funding from Brazilian venture investors DGF Investimentos in 2008, Digipix has multiplied its revenue five-fold and has grown to 160 employees. Perlman, a Stanford University graduate, has expanded the São Paulo-based company to become Brazil's largest producer of wedding albums for professional photographers.

A cornerstone of the company's achievement is its environmentally sensitive approach to photo-printing, which has capitalized on Brazilian consumers' hunger for ecofriendly products. According to the company website, Digipix was the first company in the world to use an ink-based printing system to create “Ecopix” — digital photos that are printed on ecologically friendly paper without the use of heavy metals like silver halides to fix the images onto paper. The printing process is designed to minimize energy consumption and eliminate environmental contamination, and the photographic paper is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council of Brazil.

It took nearly two years for the company to develop the process for printing Ecopix, which requires special printing equipment and software and, so far, is limited to printing 4x6- inch (10x15-cm) color photographs. But the company is convinced that it's only a matter of time before ecological printing processes will completely replace chemical processes in the photography industry.

Today, Digipix ships throughout Brazil, and its products are sold in stores in two-thirds of Brazil's states. Perlman has noticed that the company now delivers products to locations far from the traditional economic hubs of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro—suggesting that the country's modernizing Internet infrastructure now allows Brazil's most remote communities to participate more fully in the market economy.

Perlman believes his company's success reflects Brazil's transformation since 2004—both in terms of economic success and in attitudes toward entrepreneurship. “There have been dramatic changes [...] in society's acceptance of the entrepreneurial way of life, and government's acceptance of the need to encourage it,” he says. “Digipix has taken advantage of that shift.”

[Back to top](#)

Political Innovator: Mardoqueo Cancax

Growing up in the Indigenous municipality of Patzún, Guatemala, Mardoqueo Cancax experienced first-hand the frustration of living in a community without good roads and adequate infrastructure. But when he became a parent, he felt even more keenly how such challenges imperiled the future of Patzún's children. He joined a parents' committee working on municipal development projects and educational improvements—eventually becoming the committee's president.

By 2011, Cancax had become the mayor of his hometown—a progression that he says still surprises him. “To be honest, I didn't have a political calling,” he says.

Others obviously disagreed. Two major Guatemalan parties—*La Gran Alianza Nacional* (The Great National Alliance—GANA) and *El Partido Patriota* (The Patriotic Party)—tried to recruit him as a candidate. He chose *El Partido Patriota*, but the 41-year-old is less concerned with party identity than with keeping his roots firmly in his hometown. *Patzuneros*, he says, need “a humble mayor who lives and shares with them, and who runs their municipality with transparency and efficiency.”

To all appearances, he's never deviated from that vision. Soon after his election in 2011, he founded a “digital democracy zone” to promote transparency and citizen participation. At the same time, he has been intent on preserving the cultural traditions of his community. Patzún, population 54,303, is 94 percent Indigenous. Most residents speak Kaqchikel, a Mayan language; but Cancax worries that younger generations are more preoccupied with improving their Spanish or learning a third language. “[Our language] is a treasure,” he observes.

Cancax has found a way to bring together both tradition and innovation. Since most *patzuneros* don't have computers at home, the municipality opened a 35-computer digital community center that offers computer literacy courses in Spanish to residents—though most instructors also speak Kaqchikel. Other amenities include free Internet in the public square—a service that is generally used by students and youth—and access to Skype in the digital community center, where Patzún's citizens can visit with family members living abroad.

For Cancax, computer literacy is also a key to improving government accountability. The town website is loaded with information about government programs and projects, as well as documents that outline how the municipality's money is spent. And it provides information on the history and traditions of Patzún—in both Spanish and Kaqchikel. Other sites serve as a forum for communication between citizens and municipal employees: Patzún's Facebook site, which has 1,844 followers, includes everything from praise for the municipality's cultural events to locals asking for updates on road construction. Cancax says that such interaction is essential to good government: “if they talk to us and no one replies, that trust begins to get lost.”

But Patzún's digital community initiative extends past the municipality and even Guatemala. The videos and photos published on Patzún's social media sites are frequently viewed by *patzuneros* who have migrated to the U.S. or Canada. The YouTube video of the Sunday market alone has more than 13,000 views. The municipality's Google Plus, Pinterest, YouTube, and Facebook sites have thousands of photos and videos documenting everyday life in Patzún—such as footage in Kaqchikel of elderly Mayan women teaching viewers how to make *tayuyos to'om* (tamales cooked in corn husk leaves) on *piedras de moler* (grinding stones).

Last year, the *Asociación Iberoamericana de Centros de Investigación y Empresas de Telecomunicaciones* (Ibero-American Association of Research Centers and Telecommunications) recognized the cultural impact of Cancax's initiatives. During the *XIV Encuentro Iberoamericano de Ciudades Digitales 2013* (XIV Ibero-American Meeting of Digital Cities 2013), Patzún won an award for its use of digital media to preserve and promote its cultural heritage.

Cancax is confident that Patzún's participatory digital democracy initiatives can—and should—be replicated elsewhere. "This is an amazing tool that we have to take advantage of," he says. "If we don't, we are just wasting valuable time."

View a YouTube video in Kaqchikel from Patzún, Guatemala below.

[Back to top](#)



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