

Boldijarre Koronczay, president of Éminence Organic Skin Care

As the charismatic frontman of organic skincare brand Éminence, Boldijarre Koronczay is famous for his high-energy presentations and daring dress sense. But behind the megawatt smile and velvet jacket is a serious businessman with a poignant story.

Hungarian-born Koronczay was just four years old when he was diagnosed with leukemia and given a 0.1% chance of survival. During that time, his forward-thinking parents turned to organic and biodynamic produce to feed their ailing son, a decision he credits his life to. He ascribes his work ethic to his family too, including his 93-year-old grandmother, who helps harvest ingredients for Éminence to this day.

"Both my parents are extremely hard working," he explains. "My mom put in crazy hours as an esthetician and managed to take care of two kids at the same time." Koronczay followed in her footsteps, gaining his esthetician's license, while his older brother Attila—now Éminence's general manager—initially trained as a civil engineer, just like their father. "We're the perfect combination—I'm the showman on the road, and he's the backbone of the business in the office," Koronczay explains. It's a partnership that he insists has endured with hardly a single argument, which is all the more surprising given the journey they embarked upon together nearly two decades ago.

In 1996, the brothers moved more than 5,000 miles away to Vancouver, whose high quality of living and green policies appealed. At first, the struggling immigrants shared a tiny apartment and worked full-time, minimum-wage jobs. Ever the entrepreneurs, the duo sought out run-down accommodations and offered to remodel them in exchange for rent, enabling them to plow every spare penny into their fledgling skincare business. They launched Éminence in 1998, but even in their eco-friendly adoptive city, it was nine years before it took off, something that Koronczay is keen to emphasize.

"People only see the success—they never see the road taken to get there," he says. "And that's a great message for people who may not become successful right away: it's all about believing in what you're doing." It was that determination—and the presence of his brother—that prevented Koronczay from throwing in the towel. "I thought about quitting many times but I didn't, because I really believed we would succeed." And now, as the president of an award-winning company whose products are sold in nearly 50 countries, he no doubt realizes he was right.—*Lesley McCave*

Tell us about the most challenging part of your job.

Trying to be in many places at once. Éminence has grown so much internationally that distributors want me to be at every event. Living up to expectations is difficult. I almost created my own monster! And I want to make sure that I'm taking care of our internal customers—Éminence's 300 employees—just as well. Happy people create good service.

Do you have any advice for people entering the world of skin care today?

Education is key. It's something that no one can take away from you. It doesn't matter where you go, it's yours forever. Also, try to diversify, because the more licenses and skills you gain, the more versatile you are when it comes to getting hired. Never settle. Always grow. If you're not growing, you're shrinking.

What would you say to people who remain unconvinced about organic skin care?

It has come a long way, from frou frou, fluffy creams and jellies to very effective yet healthful alternatives to chemical formulations. With today's organic skin care you can achieve dramatic results without any of the harmful side effects.

How do you enjoy spending your spare time?

I love to travel and I love sports. Right now I'm devoting my free time to the Éminence Kids movement, which is working with farmers to grow and supply organic fruits and vegetables to children in hospitals. It's ridiculous that when kids are already sick, they're given chemotherapy and then fed French fries and mac and cheese made with processed cheese. I find that just as



crazy as those TV commercials saying "eight out of ten doctors recommend these cigarettes" 50 years ago! So far the new program is available in Hungary and Canada, and I'm hoping that eventually it will be in every country.

Is there something most people don't know about you?

I have my receptionist or, if it's after hours, my cleaning lady, approve any new hire. It doesn't matter what kind of job it's for or how much of a rock star the candidate was in the interview: if they weren't nice to the receptionist or cleaner during the time they were alone with them, I won't hire them. I used to sweep up hair in a salon—people mistreated me many times, and it taught me a valuable lesson. I always say, 'don't treat people how you want to be treated: treat them better than how you want to be treated'.

Which celebrity do you most admire?

Robin Williams. Meeting him and seeing what a true comic and great human being he was was such an inspiration to me. It led me to design my seminars around humor and entertainment. For me, one of the biggest enjoyments in life is making people laugh. Anyone who has seen my presentations knows that!

How do you define happiness?

Happiness is a state of mind, not a situation. It's not based on your circumstances. You can always choose to have such a positive attitude that makes other people wish they were you. ■