

Blake Mycoskie
Founder, TOMS Shoes

Blake Mycoskie is a dynamic entrepreneur that has started six successful businesses from the ground up. After being recruited to Southern Methodist University to play tennis, Mycoskie started EZ Laundry, a door-to-door laundry service aimed at fellow college students. The company soon expanded to seven colleges across the Southwest, with 40 employees and 8 trucks.

After selling EZ Laundry to his business partner, Blake traveled to Nashville where, inspired by the larger-than-life billboards in Hollywood, set out to create an outdoor media company aimed at the Music City's leading country stars. Mycoskie's renegade efforts soon drew the attention of industry giant, Clear Channel, who purchased Mycoskie's remaining billboards in Nashville and Dallas.

With two successful companies already under his belt, Blake plunged himself into the world of reality television. Teaming up with his sister, Paige, Blake competed on the second season of CBS' hit show, The Amazing Race, coming just four minutes away from the \$1 million dollar grand prize. This experience inspired Mycoskie to create Reality 24/7, a cable TV channel dedicated to all-access reality news and programming. Teaming up with Larry Namer, co-founder of the E! Entertainment Network, and Kay Koplovitz, former CEO of the USA Network, Mycoskie raised over \$2 million dollars for the project from venture capitalists and former reality stars. The buzz for Reality 24/7 was so great that Rupert Murdoch decided to create his own all-reality network, thereby ending Mycoskie's rogue efforts.

Now living in Los Angeles, Mycoskie teamed up with the creators of TrafficSchool.com to create DriversEdDirect, a behind-the-wheel training school featuring Hybrid cars and hip instructors. To help promote DriversEdDirect, Blake created Closer Marketing Group - a Santa Monica based marketing firm specializing in brand development and viral marketing.

While vacationing in South America in 2006, Mycoskie discovered the Alpargata, a traditional rope-soled shoe that has been worn by Argentina farmers for the last 100 years. At the same time, Blake was struck by the terrible poverty that he saw: too poor to afford shoes, children developed cuts and scrapes on their feet that led to serious infections. Blake returned to Los Angeles with 200 pairs of shoes in his duffel bag and the idea for a new company, TOMS Shoes. The motto for TOMS is "Make life more comfortable." Mycoskie accomplishes this goal with a unique Argentine-inspired shoe and a one-for-one commitment to match each pair sold with a donated pair to a child in need.

After selling 10,000 pairs of shoes from his apartment in Venice, Mycoskie returned to Argentina with friends, family and his new TOMS' Family to hand-deliver 10,000 pairs of shoes to kids in need. The trip was filmed by filmmaker Ken Kokin (co-producer of the Academy Award Winning Usual Suspects) and is currently being turned into a documentary for entry into the Sundance Film Festival.

Since the Argentine Shoe Drop, TOMS has moved from Blake's studio in Venice to a 6000 square foot studio in Santa Monica. The company includes 18 full-time employees focusing on sales, public relations, logistics, production, and graphic design.

Because of its unique one-for-one philosophy, TOMS has benefited from tremendous media attention that has made traditional marketing unnecessary. TOMS has already been featured in The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, PEOPLE Magazine, TIME Magazine, VOGUE, Elle, Oprah Magazine, CNBC's The Big Idea with Donny Deutsche, and is set to be included in the Holiday Gift Guides of a number of leading magazines.

Mycoskie just returned from South Africa where he hand-delivered 50,000 pairs of shoes to children in need. He is 31 years old and lives on a boat in Los Angeles.