



PHOTO: MARGO MANDELLA

POWER-Boise's Dan Robbins organizes a TV-documentary climbing trip.

By Dick Frazier

Rock star.

Robbins being interviewed for Outdoor Idaho's documentary, "Summit Idaho."

It's hard to find true passion in life. Whether in a job, hobbies or relationships, finding something that makes us get up in the morning, or trudge through snow on the top of a steep mountain peak in the middle of winter, can often feel unattainable. But in 1998, when Dan Robbins looked up outside his uncle's cabin in Fairfield, Idaho, the mountain held his gaze. He decided he needed to conquer it.



PHOTO: JOHN PLATT



PHOTO: DAN ROBBINS

Today Robbins is working for POWER in Boise as the manager of the IT Application Development/Support Group (AppsDev), but his need to ascend the next big peak still drives him daily. AppsDev creates and maintains POWER's internal applications as well as integrates and supports third-party systems that POWER uses. Programs like Oracle ERP, Deltek, Time Card, Employee Search and Project Interface all fall under the umbrella of Robbins' group; and when POWER needs a new capability that requires application development or database management, they come to him.

It's the lists

You may not think that the kind of man who enjoys sitting down in front of his computer to write lines and lines of code would be the same kind of man who escapes on the weekends to the mountains to climb high and be in nature, but the juxtaposition is surprisingly common.

"There have been actual studies that reveal a lot of computer scientists, mathematicians and people in similar professions like to do this. They're not sure why, but it's probably the lists."

That's not your ordinary to-do lists Robbins is talking about. It's the list of peaks they attain and it grows with each passing year. Aside from that correlation, he finds that climbing peaks and his work as a manager have a lot in common.

"As a manager, I have to do things like prepare for meetings, take care of my people and make decisions. When I organize a trip, it's no different. I've got to prepare—and that doesn't mean 10 minutes before I head out the door I just throw some stuff in my pack. I've got to

communicate with the people I'm going with, tell them what equipment to bring, tell them what to expect, set things like turnaround times and then manage it all when we get there."

Though planning a hike can seem a lot like planning a project, it has a level of intensity that we don't usually find in an office.

Peak perspectives

"I find it a lot easier to make day-to-day decisions after you've made a few life-or-death decisions. Let's say it's a whiteout, the wind is blowing at 50 miles-per-hour, you're at 14,000 feet on Mt. Rainier and you have to make a decision on what to do. That sure as hell makes every decision you make day-to-day a great deal easier. It gives you a different perspective, and you can think a little quicker on your feet."

So for Robbins, his experience at POWER enables him to better organize a climbing trip, and his climbing experience makes him a better manager. It's no surprise that he was picked by Outdoor Idaho, a popular local

It gives you a different perspective, and you can think a little quicker on your feet.

Goat envy.

Robbins has done all types of climbing, but most of what he likes to do is called "scrambling." Pictured scrambling up White Mountain, Idaho (left). The indisputable scrambling expert—the mountain goat (right).



PHOTO: JOHN PLATT



PHOTO: JAMES JUST

PBS television show, to put together a team to climb a peak for their next documentary.

Adventure in television

“The producer called me after seeing my website and hearing about me. She wanted a diverse mix of people on the team—old, young, female. Those were my only working requirements. So, I organized it like I would any other trip: I asked a guidebook author, another guy that has a popular website like mine, a woman friend and a younger kid that I knew. Then we set a date and we set the peak.”

And so in late June 2013 they took off from Boise and headed east to Gilmore Peak near Leadore, Idaho. They ran into problems before they even started. Robbins, however, knew exactly what to do.

“We were in the midst of a record hot spell. So we ended up changing the peak at the last minute to a higher one where we wouldn’t be sweltering at camp. Here we planned something for eight months, we get there and they say, ‘This isn’t what we expected. It’s hot, it’s windy. Do you have anywhere better?’ I said, ‘Actually, I do.’”

After arriving at the new location, they set out for the climb with camera crew, director and producer in tow. The camera man (impressively) carried a 40-pound HD camera to film the journey. Since no one in the group had ever climbed while being filmed, the experience presented some interesting challenges, as well as some delays.

Sound editor’s nightmare

“At every route decision point, as we pulled out the maps, they would start rolling film. ‘Why are you guys deciding this way instead of that way? How’s the weather looking today? Why does that rock formation look like it does?’ They asked about everything, so you’re constantly stopping and doing mini-interviews, which means I was mic’d up the entire day as well.”

For those of us who know Robbins personally, we understand the danger of giving him a microphone. Let’s just say he isn’t known for being the silent type.

“Yeah, I run my mouth. I joke. When I finally saw the producer, several months had passed since we left the peak. I saw her at the premiere and she was just shaking her head. They loved what I gave them, but sifting through eight hours of me talking must have been tough.”

15 minutes of fame

When the episode finally aired, Robbins’ local celebrity status went up. He’s already well known for his website, IdahoSummits.com, but being on the small screen solidified him as an Idaho expert. With his last big adventure seemingly miles behind, Dan is focused on the next climb.

“I used to do specific peaks on specific dates, but I’ve generally gotten away from that because it keeps my wife happier. Each winter, I try to get above 10,000 feet which is a pretty big challenge when you consider the snow and the roads being closed.

Rocky Mountain high.

Robbins has traveled extensively outside of Idaho to climb, including Oregon, California, Montana and Colorado. Robbins traverses a ridge and prepares to summit (left). Snow climb on Mt. Evans, Colorado (right).

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PHOTO: TODD EVANS



PHOTO: SAUNI SYMONDS

It's hard to get near anything that high during that time of year. This winter's 10,000-footer is Copper Mountain on the Idaho-Montana border."

Peak bagging 101

Conquering a peak doesn't have to be as hard as it might seem. Although some require a lot of preparation and skill there are many in Idaho that, with a couple bottles of water and a few hours set aside, can be easily done by nearly anyone.

"There's one in Boise about fifteen miles out of town towards Idaho City that we say is our 'little miniature climb.' It's not a huge mountain by any standard, but it's a great introduction to peak bagging. It's called Cervidae Peak. It's steep, but not too crazy. Once you get to the top, everything just drops away and it gives you the feel of what a big mountain can do. And it's only a 30-minute drive from here."

And, of course, Hailey offers dozens of hikes just minutes from the office.

"You can leave the office at 5:00 PM and be on top of a really cool peak by 7:00 PM with views of dozens of alpine peaks. Carbonate is a great example. It's right near downtown; it has trails to the top and it has really killer views once you get up there. It would take the average person maybe three hours round trip."

So the next time you find yourself in Hailey or Boise looking for adventure, consider experiencing the beauty of Idaho from on high. And to get you in the proper mood, check out the episode called "**Summit Idaho**" featuring, among others, our own Dan Robbins. 🐾

Dick Frazier is an area lead for the Ops IT Service Desk Group located in Boise.

Summit shot.

Robbins selected a hike that would normally have taken about four hours to climb, but because of the delays with filming the documentary, took nine hours total. Robbins atop Rosencrance Peak, near Mackay, Idaho (left). The documentary team (right), with Robbins in the back row, far right.

IDAHOSUMMITS.COM

Robbins' website is a great resource for peak and trail information. You can also see pictures and reports from his many hikes around Idaho and beyond. Here's a direct link to his report on Boise's **Cervidae Peak**. And make sure to also check out the "Epic Stories" section."



PHOTO: DYLAN FADGEN