



# alumni success stories:

## shifting the landscape of leadership

### ABE TALEB AND ALEX LACKNER

**LEADERS IN LEARNING, 2010**  
**ALLEGHENY COUNTY EXECUTIVE FELLOWSHIP, 2002**



Connecting the right people through its extensive pipeline of leaders is at the core of Coro Pittsburgh's mission. So when Abe Taleb was launching ReWork, formally known as TerraShift -- his start-up social venture that focuses on global sustainability issues -- he tapped into his Coro network to find Alex Lackner, an experienced professional and alumni who has worked on sustainability and environmental issues for over a decade.

As alumni of Coro Pittsburgh's Allegheny County Executive Fellowship (Lackner '02) and Leaders in Learning program (Taleb '10), both Abe and Alex have a unique perspective on how Coro Pittsburgh has prepared civic leaders to tackle some of the region's most pressing problems. And with ReWork, Abe is seeking to engage an emerging group of civic leaders to cultivate his own pipeline of young professionals committed to sustainability issues in the region, across the country, and around the globe.

"Young people want to do something good with their careers," says Abe, "and leadership programs, like Coro and like ReWork, can show people what making a difference is really like."

Abe and Alex are excited by the potential impact of the programs and services ReWork will offer. They believe developing sustainability strategies for Pittsburgh's business, non-profits, neighborhoods, and government organizations, is an idea that can serve as a way of moving the region forward. Through their Coro Pittsburgh training, they know that fostering partnerships -- across organizations, across geographic boundaries, and within communities -- is the only way to achieve the systematic change needed to move the needle on sustainable development.

"I believe in the value of sustainability as a framework that opens opportunities for communities and organizations to collaborate and to be more effective in the work they are doing," says Alex. "I work with a lot of different organizations, but the idea of sustainable development can be a shared 'mental mode' that bridges the artificial boundaries that prevent us from working together on these types of big challenges."

"Many people pigeon-hole the definition of what sustainability is, and link it only to the environment. They don't see the broader spectrum," says Abe. "I always like to quote the Brundtland Commission Report that indicates our global society will never be truly sustainable until poverty is eradicated. The idea is that sustainability includes people's ability to provide for themselves and their future generations. Sustainability is not only an issue of environmentalism, it is an idea right on message with civic engagement, and working with individuals, communities and business so they can help themselves today and help future generations as well."

"Leadership development programs help you get exposure to working on serious community issues," says Alex. "There are not many career acceleration programs where you can get the kind of experience working on complicated and complex issues like you can with Coro Pittsburgh's programs. We believe that ReWork can offer people these kinds of opportunities as well, with a focus on the challenges of sustainability."

Both Abe and Alex believe ReWork will offer a new approach for young professionals to lead the way in transforming economic, environmental, and civic programs that create more sustainable models for development in the region.

"Sustainability is an urgent issue that we need to face. It's almost daunting. We need to face up to this at every turn, make it part of every organization's mission, and every community's vision about their future. This is happening now," says Abe. "We want to be on the ground trying to make as big an impact as possible and keep pressing on the levers, to move us toward a more sustainable future."