

IN PERSON

EMERGING LEADER

# Making it up as he goes

A TECH EXEC WITH BONA FIDES IN ANIME, JOURNALISM AND WEDDING PLANNING

**W**hen 27,000 fairies, superheroes and dragon-slayers descended on the Hynes Convention

Center in April (some holding their tails to keep from getting caught in the revolving doors), who was in charge?

Hint: His costume might fool you. “I dressed up as a common Asian businessman,” says Tuan Pham, the outgoing president of the New England

**▶ CLOSER LOOK**

**TUAN PHAM**

**Title:** Executive vice president, Tech Networks of Boston; President (May 2012-2015), New England Anime Society

**Age:** 35

**Education:** Bachelor’s degree in journalism, Boston University, 1998; Master’s degree in journalism, Boston University, 2003

**Residence:** Brighton

Anime Society, hosts of Anime Boston. His uniform is from his paying gig as executive vice president of Tech Networks of Boston.

Born in Worcester and raised in Haverhill, Tuan was interested in journalism as a teen. After first majoring in computer science, he earned undergrad

and graduate degrees in journalism at Boston University. His two disciplines – technology and interpersonal communications – have informed each other throughout his career, Pham says, with his tech jobs growing out of marketing positions.

He followed that path to Tech Networks of Boston, which provides IT services to a roster of well-established Boston nonprofits such as St. Francis House and Volunteers of America. Joining in 2007 as marketing manager, he was named EVP in March.

Pham is married to another anime fan, Hope McChesney (“If she took my name, she’d sound like a nonprofit,” he says.) He spoke with Business Journal correspondent Robin Washington who



ROBIN WASHINGTON

– full disclosure – was a Boston Herald reporter who enlisted Pham, then a 25-year-old sports clerk, in covering the breaking news story of a fatal Chinatown-based bus company crash in 2001.

**For Tech Networks, do you ever come across people who are into anime?** I actually use Anime Boston as my hiring pool. We’re an IT company, so who do you think gravitates to that general nerd culture? And I can trust them because they report to me at the show. These people are actually really good employees.

**Which of your clients particularly stand out to you?** Perkins School for

the Blind. The way they approach technology is extremely different than everybody else. They’re asking how can we use technology as assistive tools? And not just for blind people—that’s the big stereotype. They’re beyond that now. It’s showing us a different side of things because it’s an experience that we haven’t had; we’ve never been blind, but we have to help them do the same things as anybody anywhere.

**How did you get involved in Anime Boston?** I joined as their newsletter editor and moved up the ranks and became their director of PR and then president of the org. What I love about that show is that it allows people who

really are on the fringes of their high school society – they’re the geeks, kids that don’t really fit in – to meet other people like them and have a really, really good time.

**Geek is chic.** Exactly. But those kids are not what you see on “Big Bang Theory.” They’re super-introverted, awkward, but at the same time they have this love of anime that binds them all together. That’s what our show offers them.

**You were in a (summer high school journalism boot camp.) Was that what got you interested in journalism?** I took a class in high school and it was like, yeah, I kind of like this. I was named editor-in-chief before the program started, so I was like, “I might be able to do this.” I ended up going to J school at BU and worked at the Herald (as a sports clerk) throughout. I remember I was at the sports desk when you came over and said, “Tuan, I need you. Do you speak Chinese?” And I was like, “Robin, no. I speak French.”

**I think I said, “Close enough.” That was for the bus crash. You’re not Chinese and I’m not Chinese but between the two of us, we were acceptable for people to talk to.** You were going to send me to New York on one of their buses. Then we ended up running into this female who already had a ticket. Then she turned around to another Asian American and started speaking Chinese. And we thought, “Hey, this might be someone we should talk to.”

**Did the bus crash story have any bearing on your life, your career?** Always keep your eyes open. You don’t know what you’re going to find. You’ve got to be alert, you’ve got to be there. And that’s how you make stuff happen.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

## How important is mentoring for your business?



**CAROL MANSFIELD**  
CEO, STAT-SOUTHCOAST/  
COASTLINE EMS

Very important. Our senior supervisors work closely with our paramedics and EMTs. We are an industry of first responders for medical issues and mentoring is vital to our mission of providing the best service in the region.



**JACQUELINE COLLINS**  
PARTNERING FOR  
PERFORMANCE

One of the roles of a coach is to mentor and provide strategies for businesses to move forward, so I would say it is very important. In my role as Chair of the South Shore Chamber’s board of directors, we also place a high value on mentoring our new and existing members.



**JONATHAN DENN**  
CHAIR, VISTAGE

Our business is all about mentoring – using the power of peer relationships to help business owners solve problems and seize opportunities. We just completed the first year of our private advisory board with businesses across Southeastern Massachusetts; each individual member has benefitted greatly.