

## CEO FILE

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

**Name:** Robert Cheetham  
**Title:** President and CEO  
**Company, city:** Avenia Inc., Philadelphia  
**Type of company:** Software development for geographic analysis.  
**Recent project:** PhillyHistory.org — an online database that provides access to a collection of historic photos of Philadelphia, searchable by location, address, year, neighborhood or keyword. Some of the feedback we have received from Philadelphians who found photos of their parents or grandparents' homes has brought tears to our eyes.  
**Education:** University of Pennsylvania, master's in landscape architecture; University of Michigan, BA in Japanese studies.  
**First job:** Coordinator for international relations, Konan-cho, Japan.  
**Little-known fact about you:** I like to hum to opera when I'm writing.  
**Home:** Art Museum area, Philadelphia.

### BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY

**Essential business philosophy:** Choose complex projects that have social value and sufficient intellectual interest so that our employees don't get bored and feel good about what we are doing.  
**Best way to keep a competitive edge:** Build strong relationships; read broadly on inspiring projects other organizations are doing.  
**Yardstick of success:** Being known for the complexity and innovation of the projects we take on. At 80, knowing that my activities have made a difference in the world.  
**Goal yet to be achieved:** Write a book about my British grandfather's experience as a Japanese prisoner of war working on the Thai-Burma railway.

### JUDGMENT CALLS

**Best decision:** Returning from Japan to study landscape architecture (introduced me to GIS technology).  
**Worst decision:** Returning from Japan to study landscape architecture (never ended up practicing).  
**Toughest decision:** Hiring our first employee.  
**Mentor:** Dana Tomlin, for giving me enough rope to hang myself.

### TRUE CONFESSIONS

**Word that best describes you:** Reliable.  
**Like best about your job:** Being intellectually stimulated and working with colleagues who get excited about solving spatial problems that have never been tackled before.  
**Like worst about your job:** Repeating myself.  
**The most important lesson you've learned:** Don't contradict my French wife.  
**Life motto:** Never be bored.  
**Greatest fear:** Letting down the people I care about.  
**Person most interested in meeting and why:** George Soros — his support for democracy and civil society as the founder of the Open Society Institute is inspiring.  
**Company you respect most and why:** Google — excellent values (the founders' motto is "don't be evil"), flexible benefits and independent research projects have resulted in a steady stream of products that are changing

the way we interact with the world.

**First choice for a new career:** History researcher.

**Greatest extravagance:** Amazon.com.

### ET CETERA

**Award/honor most proud of:** Being nominated by a colleague for a prestigious award that I did not actually win.  
**Most influential book:** "Out of Control," by Kevin Kelly and "Envisioning Information," by Edward R. Tufte.  
**Favorite music:** Cowboy Junkies.  
**Favorite movie:** "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," directed by Ang Lee.  
**Favorite restaurant:** Sagami in Collingswood, N.J.  
**Favorite vacation spot:** Istanbul, Turkey.  
**Favorite room in the house and why:** Reading room — I love the comfort of our walls of books. They remind me of places I've been, dreams I've dreamt and aspirations I have.  
**Favorite way to spend free time:** Listening to audio books on my iPod and reading cheesy sci-fi.  
**Automobile you drive:** A Dahon Helios XL folding bicycle and PhillyCarShare. ■

