

(1) Mobile Phone Co - MD to Business Conference)

(EXTRACT - PART 1)

We're here tonight to celebrate enterprise, and I'd like to describe to you what I believe are the four cornerstones of success for anyone who aspires to be an entrepreneur.

These are the four. The Will to Win. Commercial Intellect. Resilience. Ambition.

Let's take them one at a time.

Number One. Will to Win

I've told the story before about how I was bullied as a kid because of my red hair and freckles, and how that made me a bit of a fighter. As you can see, I don't have the problem with my hair any more. If anyone tries to bully me now, I just stand under a light and dazzle them to death. And as far as freckles are concerned, I've been happy ever since I discovered they were actually sign of masculine virility.

OK it's a cliché, kid bullied at school gets tough, becomes a winner. But there's a bit more to it than that. The will to win is about deciding what you want and being prepared to go all the way to get it. All the way. Within the law, naturally. Within a moral code, most importantly. But without wavering, with the firm conviction that you are the best and that's why you **should** win. And with all the necessary strategic flexibility to make sure you **do** win.

Number Two. Commercial Intellect.

That's a pretty smart phrase for a former second hand car salesman, don't you think ? Well don't knock car salesmen. A good one has got commercial intellect in spades. All it

means is, knowing your business inside out, knowing your customer's mind, understanding the market you're in and knowing how to exploit it to the full.

The only difference between second hand cars and telecoms is the products are cheaper, the suits are smarter and the bonuses are bigger. Smart thinking, forward thinking, strategic thinking. Commercial Intellect. Cornerstone, remember. Without it, everything falls down.

Number Three. Resilience

In the early years of the Group, we experienced extraordinary success. At the same time we made some terrible mistakes. How the hell the two went together I'm not really sure I can say. Lack of fear had something to do with it, perhaps. A new market where everybody had the same level of experience – i.e zero. In the Kingdom of the Blind, the one-eyed man is King, is the saying. Imagine that in my case – a shaven head and an eye patch. That would have frightened a few City analysts.

But there's one thing we had then, and still have, and that's resilience. The ability to persevere when things are going wrong, to tough it out, have courage of your convictions. All the stuff you think about after you've just driven round the face of the cliff on two wheels and your most urgent need is a change of underpants. But it is absolutely crucial to success to be able to take the knocks, to keep the faith and to be willing to come back for more.

Number Four. Ambition.

Of all the four Cornerstones, ambition is the one that says "The Future" loudest. When we bought the Discovery Store, it was a big part of our look to the future. Mobiles had become a replacement market, the explosive growth had gone, competition was fiercer, margins finer. That market was still there - is still there - but it was time to diversify.

So how big can this new venture become ?

When I spoke to one of the Store managers and asked him about his potential he proudly replied that he reckoned he could raise his turnover from £5m to £10m a year. Why stop there, I said. Well maybe £15m, he said. How about £100m, I said ?

That's what I mean by ambition. Why make limits ? Is the market there ? Go and get it. Are there physical capacity restrictions ? Remove them. Have you got the products, the people ? You can find them if you look and you pay the right price. How far can you go ? Farther than you think.

Ambition isn't "I want to own a BMW." Ambition is "I want to own BMW".

(CONT...)

Another Speech >>>

2. SPEECH BY M.D. TO SALES CONFERENCE

(TO NEW STAFF, AT THE TIME A NEW COMPANY HAD BEEN TAKEN OVER)

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to begin by saying what a pleasure it is to be here in this lovely city of Cambridge. Although I did have a bit of a difficult journey getting here. It's a rather awkward route from Cheshire where I come from, so I had to use one of those funny old roads. You know the kind. Full of cracks and bumps and potholes, with road-works and hold-ups and diversions everywhere. The M1, I think it was called.

If I can just say a few words to introduce myself, I've been in the business of making fibre containers for all my working life, and I've been running my own company, Fibre Box, for the last fifteen.

They say you can judge a man by the company he keeps, and you can judge a businessman by the company he keeps solvent. Well, I do manage to keep my company solvent – unlike a colleague of mine who had a call from his bank manager last week. The manager said, “Mr. Jackson, my head office has told me they're worried about the state of three of their accounts – Nigeria's, Bolivia's and yours.”

What I see as my purpose here today is to advise and encourage and enthuse all of you in your selling efforts, because as we all know the key to any business' success in the end is maintaining and improving sales performance. And I'm very well aware that your success or otherwise could well make the difference between me staying solvent or being on the wrong end of my bank manager's sense of humour.

So what about our products ? I'm always a little bit nervous when I stand up to talk about my products, because while the business has always been fascinating to me, I have to appreciate that not everyone sees it the same way.

When I think about the kind of attributes I might like my products to have to make them more fascinating to other people, I quickly realise that whatever fibre containers have going for them, they're distinctly lacking in excitement, extremely unromantic, and desperately short of sex appeal.

And since I've managed to introduce sex into the proceedings already, I should tell you that I learned something important the other day. Apparently there are three things that tell you

when a man is losing his virility. The first one is loss of memory, and the second one iser

Well, anyway, the thought did occur to me that I could use as my theme today the words of an old folk song of a few years ago that was called "Little Boxes".

I don't know how many of you remember it, it was really a sort of social comment or satire about materialism, talking about upwardly mobile people and the little boxes were the houses they lived in. The chorus went :

"There's a pink one and a blue one
And a green one and a yellow one
And they're all made out of ticky-tacky
And they all look just the same."

So I thought, well maybe we don't do pink ones and yellow ones, but we do make boxes in blue and grey, and black and red, and a whole range of other colours.

And then I thought, we make them out of millboard and resin and vulcanised fibre and plastic propylene, even if we haven't got round to making them out of ticky-tacky yet. I'm not sure what ticky-tacky is, for all I know it's the same thing as fibre-retardant black resin, in which case that's what they make houses out of in America.

But one thing I know for certain is that our boxes definitely don't all look just the same.

Sometimes I wish they did, then I might be able to save on my production costs. But the truth is that we make at least xxx different types of containers out of xxx different materials in xxx different styles and xxx different colours, together with a wide variety of fitting and linings.

Put all that together and you got more permutations than you'll find tattoos in a popstars' dressing room.

Let me give you some examples of the kind of uses to which our products can be put , that you might not be aware of.

(DETAIL FILLED IN BY CLIENT)

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Well, ladies and gentlemen, I hope you're now a bit more familiar with fibre Box containers than when I started. I hope I've been able to interest you and enthuse you and perhaps surprise you in describing the things that fibre containers can do.

I certainly hope that I've been able to give you the kind of confidence in the product that you'll need to make the customer have confidence in you.

I wouldn't want you to fall into the category of the sales force of a company I once knew that sent all its sales people on a cruise as a goodwill exercise. Unfortunately during the voyage one of the men died, so the captain ordered a steward to have the man in cabin 26 sewn up in a sack and buried at sea. An hour later the steward reported that the man in cabin 46 had been duly despatched. The captain exploded. "I said 26, not 46. Surely you could tell that the man in 46 wasn't dead?" So the steward said, "Well he said he wasn't, sir, but you know what bloody liars these salesmen are."

We have a slogan at Fibre Box that says to the customer, "Whatever your storage problem, we can contain it."

I'm proud of that slogan, and I'd like to emphasise once again that we are a bespoke business. You find the customers, we'll fulfil their needs. Whatever they want, we can supply it. Made to order, bespoke designed, custom built. We have never yet failed to produce what we were asked for.

My future plans for Fibre Box are to develop and expand from a firmly established base. To my mind, being in business is like riding a bicycle : either you go forward or you fall down.

With your help, I see us going forward, especially in conjunction with Topper cases now that they've joined the group. If not exactly going forward across the final frontier where no man has gone before, then at least into those businesses that have never bought Fibre Box or Topper case before.

Both our companies have had a successful past, and together I am confident we will have an even more successful future.

I look forward to sharing it with you.