



Tom Bell-Wright,
Founder and former CEO
of TBW UAE

SUCCESSFUL LEADERS

IN THE TIC INDUSTRY

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FOUNDER AND
FORMER CEO OF
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Tom is a remarkable leader in the TIC industry, having built his own successful company from the ground up over the course of 27 years. His journey to success is a testament to the power of determination, as he started his studies for an engineering degree 20 years after leaving high school and sold his house to pay for his education. In this interview, Tom shares his insights on leadership, and the challenges facing the TIC industry. His story is both inspiring and informative, offering valuable lessons for anyone seeking success in any field.



CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND HOW YOU GOT STARTED IN THE TIC SECTOR?

I took an unconventional path, beginning my studies for an engineering degree twenty years after leaving high school in England. I sold my house to pay for my education and graduated 4 years later. At the age of 41 and not drawn to being a junior engineer in a practice, I joined a small firm in my hometown of Annapolis, Maryland doing real estate development and providing some construction management services. After a year or so, serendipity led to a project to provide façade consulting to a client in Abu Dhabi on what was then the tallest high-rise in the Middle East. My new bride and I packed everything up and moved there, and I opened a branch of the company – which was subsequently ceded to me when the home firm folded.



SUCCESS IS NOT ALWAYS ACHIEVED THROUGH A CONVENTIONAL PATH, BUT THROUGH PERSISTENCE AND A WILLINGNESS TO TAKE RISKS.

CAN YOU SPEAK TO THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU HAVE FACED IN YOUR CAREER AND HOW YOU OVERCAME THEM?

I possibly made a mistake in deciding to branch into fire testing at the same time our regulator (the Civil Defense) had decided to open their own lab. In theory, governments are supposed to provide testing where it is not available in the private sector, so perhaps I thought they would give up. They didn't, and as our regulator, they made everything more difficult and cost us serious money by delaying decisions.



WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BIGGEST FACTOR AFFECTING THE TIC INDUSTRY AT THE MOMENT?

The TIC industry depends on regulation and enforcement of regulation, and on trust in the system of accreditation to ensure that testing, inspection and certification are provided honestly and without fear or favour. This has been undermined in recent years by bodies apparently yielding to commercial pressures in a competitive marketplace.

HOW DO YOU SPEND TIME OUTSIDE OF WORK?

I have varied interests and indulge them when I can. Travel, sailing, socializing with friends, and spending time with my family are all high on the list.



INDULGING IN VARIED INTERESTS AND SPENDING TIME WITH LOVED ONES OUTSIDE OF WORK CAN HELP MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE.

IN THREE WORDS ONLY, WHAT IS THE SECRET TO YOUR SUCCESS?

FORTUNE, PERSISTENCE, RESILIENCE.

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US A SPECIFIC PROJECT OR ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT YOU ARE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF AND WHY?

I suppose the cumulative accomplishment was to have built a TIC business with the best accreditations to rival the titans of the industry in our scope (building products) in the Middle East. Over 27 years, with no financial investment save the income from the business, the company grew from one man (me) to a team of over a hundred including up to 36 engineers. From façade consulting, we added curtain wall testing and subsequently fire testing and then product certification, becoming a full TIC company. This wasn't the work of one man, of course, but perhaps I can take pride in selecting or attracting fantastic employees as well.



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HOW DO YOU PRIORITIZE AND MANAGE YOUR WORKLOAD TO ENSURE SUCCESS?

I'm the captain of the ship and have very capable managers. I try to keep things going in the right direction, while constantly looking around for opportunities that we might exploit to further our interests, and identifying and managing potential threats.

WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP AND TEAM MANAGEMENT?

Relaxed. I don't like formal meetings; I mix with my staff and am often seen checking on jobs around the lab. I don't believe in time clocks because I think everyone knows their job and what has to be done – plus they have managers. I learned a long time ago that it's counter-productive to lean over people's shoulders. I believe in social events and think the Christmas party, for example, is critically important in building a healthy workplace.