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Derek Beevor

Founder of Road Tech Computer Systems

Derek Beevor's photo album would make intriguing viewing. Near the beginning would be a few photographs from his four years in the army when he served with the Parachute Regiment in Northern Ireland. Then, a few pages on, there might be some snaps of him looking like a hippie from the three years he spent travelling round Europe in a Transit van with his girlfriend. They often ran out of money and Beevor was once put in a Greek jail for a month for dancing naked on a restaurant table.

But the most recent photos in the album would show a very different scene – Beevor at the controls of his personal helicopter or standing on the lawn in front of Shenley Hall, the stately home in Hertfordshire which he uses as an office. In the intervening years Beevor, 47, has managed to create from scratch a multimillion-pound business selling computer software to the trucking industry.

There was little indication when he was younger that the Beevor story would turn out so well. Born and brought up



in Watford, he suffered two early losses: at 11 his father left the family and at 14 his twin brother died of cancer. He says: 'We went from being a family of four to being just me and my mum. It was quite tough.'

He left school with no qualifications after his teacher asked the class to write down what subjects they wanted to do for O levels – but then tore up the list Bevor had written and told him to leave. He says: 'I was gobsmacked. That afternoon I was gone – mentally scarred for life.'

His involvement with the trucking industry began on a small scale. Back home in Watford after his travels on the Continent and in need of a job, he took the mattress out of his Transit van and started using the van to make deliveries for local companies. One of his first assignments was to deliver bread rolls to McDonald's fast food restaurants, which had just started up in the UK. He worked every hour he could and eventually saved enough money to buy another van, and then another, until six years later he had built his own transport company operating 15 trucks.

‘Being in the Paras taught me that you just have to go for it and not give up’, he says. ‘Once I had one van I wanted two, and when I had two I wanted three. I was probably doing it to get my own back on the teacher who screwed up my bit of paper at school.’

The trucking company was a success, but Beevor realised he was working all week driving trucks and then spending every weekend typing out invoices and sending them to customers. ‘I thought there had to be a bloody machine that can do this. But I discovered that all the computers on the market could only do accounts.’ He was, however, determined to find a solution and so asked a small computer company to write him a program that would do exactly what he wanted. When it came up with something he thought he could improve on, he asked one of the company’s programmers to come and work for him and rewrite it with him.

The result was Roadrunner, a booking and invoicing system for transport companies that automatically invoices customers at the end of the week. After using it in his own trucking company Beevor sold a copy of his software to another transport company. When other trucking companies started asking if they could buy it he suddenly realised he had hit on a winner. Within a few years the software business had become larger than his transport company. So in 1995 he decided to sell the transport operation to concentrate his efforts on growing the software company. Sales went well and by 2004 the business had a turnover of £6 million, with customers including the British Army and all the big transport companies in the UK.

Then Beevor spotted another gap in the market. The introduction of new legislation meant that from May 2006 transport companies were required to replace the paper-based systems which recorded how many hours a driver

spent on the road with a new smart card-based digital recording device. So Beevor spent two years and £2 million developing an online system called Tachomaster, which would enable transport companies to read and analyse the data on the smart cards via the internet. Customers can download the software for free and then pay £1 a week to access the service online. Since it was launched two years ago Tachomaster has already chalked up 2,500 business customers, including Tesco, the AA and DHL. In 2009 it alone is expected to generate a turnover of £4 million, giving RoadTech a total turnover of £10 million.

Beevor now commutes to work at his stately home offices in his Hughes 500 helicopter. He says: 'I'm chuffed to bits about what I have achieved.'

He says however that he has never been driven by the idea of making money. 'Money has got nothing to do with it. I just get a kick out of the business going well. I am really pleased with every sale we make, but I get just as much of a buzz when someone buys something for £99 as I do from a half a million quid deal because it means that someone is

Fact File

Date of birth: 24 June 1955

Marital status: married with two children

Highest level of education achieved: secondary school

Qualifications: none

Interests: flying his helicopter, riding motorbikes

Personal philosophy: 'Nothing is impossible.'

going to use a product that we have made and hopefully they will be pleased with it.'

Beevor, 53, thinks that much of his success has been due to realising at an early age that if he wanted to achieve something in life it would be entirely up to him to make it happen. He says: 'When I left school I had zero expectations. I just expected to start at the bottom and work my way up. I always knew that I would have to make my own way in life and that nobody was just going to give it to me. I really believe there is nothing you can't do if you put your mind to it and believe in yourself. You just have to listen to your own drummer and not somebody else's.'