

**ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERS INTERVIEW
WITH
LORD ROBERT EDMISTON
BY DR. RICHARD J. GOOSSEN ON NOVEMBER 5TH, 2015**



BIO: Born in India in 1946, Lord Edmiston, the son of a war time fighter pilot, came to the UK at the age of three and subsequently spent, from the age of ten, five years in Kenya before returning to the UK in 1962 where he has remained to this day. He started his career as a Bank Clerk. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. Today he owns a number of companies in the property, motor and finance sectors with a combined turnover of approximately £500 million.

He is a father of a grown-up family of one son and two daughters all of whom are married and he has ten grandchildren. He is married to Tracie who also holds his firm Christian beliefs. Together in 1988 they founded CV, an international charity with offices in 22 countries working to support the Christian church in the areas of evangelism and discipleship in both the online and offline space. In the UK, Lord and Lady Edmiston have sponsored, and are Governors, of three schools, called Grace Academy with around 3,000 students aged between 11 and 18 years.

The car business, which formed part of the original I.M. Group, now imports and distributes Japanese and Chinese cars and parts in the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Baltics. I.M. Group has a Beijing office which supports Group activities and operates as a consultancy and a trading house on behalf of third party clients.

In the early 90's, I M acquired a publicly quoted property company called BHH which is now known as I.M. Properties PLC and is now the largest company in the Group. I.M. Group also owns a Finance Company.

Lord Edmiston has a keen interest in politics and in both business and social issues. Until 2010 he was the Chairman of the Midlands Industrial Council, a group of leading Midlands industrialists and businessmen who maintain a close dialogue with senior politicians of the day. On January 18th 2011 he was introduced into the House of Lords which he hopes will allow him to be a voice for good in the areas where he has a particular interest or skill.

Lord Edmiston was the recipient of the ELO Entrepreneurial Leaders Award on November 4, 2015 in Vancouver, BC, Canada in recognition of his global leadership as a Christian entrepreneur having a positive impact in communities around the world.

Company Profile:

| Item | Description |
|----------------------|--|
| Dates of Involvement | 1976 to date |
| Title | Owner/Chairman |
| Name of Company | IM Group Ltd |
| Web site | www.imgroup.co.uk |
| Head Office | Midlands, UK |
| # of Employees | 400 |
| Product/ Service | Cars, Property & Finance |
| Revenue (range) | US\$800 million |
| Public / Private | Private |

For further information on Dr. Richard J. Goossen and Entrepreneurial Leaders Organizations: www.entrepreneurialleaders.com

I. GENERAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP QUESTIONS

1. At what age did you start your first entrepreneurial venture and what was it?

At 11 years of age when I was trying to sell flowers. My first serious venture was when I was about 20, selling used cars with my friend. In terms of the company that I have now, I was 29.

2. What originally motivated you to pursue entrepreneurship and what has maintained your ongoing entrepreneurial focus?

I was always ambitious. I never thought I was better than anybody else but I thought I was at least as good, and therefore if they could do it, I didn't know why I couldn't. I was doing various things, even when I was in full-time employment. I was renting a house out. I was renting a mini-van out. I bought another house because I thought inflation was taking place. That year I earned three times my salary on the growth in the value of the houses.

I was always interested in bettering myself. I think necessity was a great driver to start with because my son came along when I was 22 and I desperately needed the money so I had to find solutions.

3. What individual(s) have been models of inspiration for you throughout your entrepreneurial career and in what way?

There have been people that have been very influential. There was one personnel officer at Ford Motor Company that pointed me in the right direction. I subsequently tried to do something for him but I couldn't track him down. He changed my life. I think getting into the fast stream of Ford Motor Company meant I was with some people that earned a lot more money than I did, who were very bright and very good.

Ultimately I got to work with a multimillionaire from America [the United States] who later became my partner. I learned a lot without realizing what I learned. I found myself later on in years saying things that he would say. So I think that being alongside good people makes a huge difference.

4. How has any formal education or training you have received (to whatever extent) been helpful? If so, in which way?

I didn't do well. I have met a lot of wealthy people who didn't do well at school. That is mainly because they were disengaged. They probably had very inquiring minds and maybe needed something to stimulate them. I know one chap who just sold his company for US\$1.5 billion and between him and his brother they only got one "GCSE" [General Certificate of Secondary Education], and that was in music. They were traders and they knew how to deal.

I think that becoming an accountant was a very good thing. Everything ends up in money, whether you are selling washing machines or building widgets. It all comes back to dollars and cents. So understanding money and how it works is important. Being comfortable with big sums and not having sleepless nights over it is also very important. If you are going to have a lot of sleepless nights then don't do it because your health is more important than that. But if you can cope with debt then fine. One of my companies had £400 million of bank debt at one stage and after 2009 we were at the point of handing the company over to the bank if they didn't work with us. Happily they did and we have now paid it all back now.

I think that a formal education is a good thing, but actual practical experience in working with people who know what they are doing is far more important. I left school with a basic education and I studied to become an accountant later. Some of my friends went on to college or university and by the time they were 23 they were just coming out, and I was already a manager at 23 and I had two company cars. So actually it seemed like on the ground experience counted for more. I still think education is very important, that is why I sponsor three schools [Grace Academy Schools in the UK].

5. How many different business ventures have you started in the course of your entrepreneurial career?

Probably about 8 - 10.

6. What percentage of these business ventures do you estimate were financially successful?

About 70%. The small ones were the ones that failed. There is a Scripture verse that talks about if there is a tree that doesn't give fruit in three years the Lord says to cut it down. The farmer says, well, let's do everything we can and if that year it doesn't give fruit then we will cut it down. I take that approach to business. I tend to get out after three or four years if it is not working. Then the losses tend to be small. If you have a big business and then you try and get out the losses can be really large. I have also sold

businesses from time to time, but I tend to hold on. For instance, we have had the Subaru franchise for the UK now coming on 40 years. There have been ups and downs but it has been a good business over the years. I have had the property business now for 22 - 23 years and it continues going really well.

II. ENTREPRENEURIAL QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR PRIMARY BUSINESS

- 7. In order to provide some context, please describe your Primary Business: what does the company do? Who does it sell to? What does it sell? What is your competitive advantage? What is the nature of your overall industry?**

My primary business is the business I started with. If your business is going to carry on for a long period of time you are going to have to change and adapt. We started off with cars because our business was being a distributor for Jensen motor parts.

Jensen manufactured cars and also made some of the car parts, but what happened was when the factory went broke I acquired all the parts. I also did deals with all the manufacturers of externally produced parts to continue supply. There was only a limited number of years that a company could survive supplying parts for cars that were no longer manufactured. I made profit in the first year because it was easy: we no longer had to worry about pricing our parts to help selling future cars, as they were no longer made. So I put the prices up by 30%. In the first year we had a £200,000 profit. It was a good deal as we had the parts pretty well free because we cleared the factory.

But then I examined what we had and we had everything. We had dealers. We had parts. We had computer systems. We had technical people. We just didn't have a car. So I went out and tried to get the franchise for Subaru in the UK, which we got in 1977. We have had that now for 40 years. After that I got another franchise which was Isuzu, then I got Hyundai, kept it for 12 years and launched it into the UK market. We also now sell Chinese cars. We expanded our distribution to Sweden, Finland, Ireland and the Baltics. We have an office in Beijing and we recently started selling Citron in Ireland.

We make money by basically being a middle man. I buy the vehicles from the vehicle manufacturer. I have to set up systems to handle the warranties, pay the customers, import the car, pay the import duty, prepare the car and make sure the cars comply with all relevant legislation. I have to provide all the advertising materials and promote the car. I act as the manufacturer in the country where the cars are sold, but I am not the manufacturer. In smaller markets, which England was at that time, this is the way a manufacturer can

open up a new market. This is a simple way of a manufacturer opening up a new market. But when you become of a certain size like Toyota or Nissan the manufacturer says, this market is too important to us now and they take over. But with smaller franchises, such as Subaru, Isuzu and Great Wall, they want to keep the distributor because it is just too difficult for them to have to handle different groups and different languages. For example, we sell 6,000 Subarus a year in Sweden. They don't have to have Japanese people learn Swedish, they just sell us the cars at a price, we do the job for them; if they are not happy with the job we do they can always dismiss us (we have five year contracts) and get someone else.

There is no long term security in that business because in a sense you are your own worst enemy. If you do really well they say it is too important to us and they have to take it over. That happened with Hyundai - they now sell 50,000 cars in Britain. It is too big a number for them not to do it themselves. I actually sold the company to another company because I could see that coming down the horizon and that company ended up with the manufacturer taking it over; I made a good profit out of the sale. That is how the import distribution business works. In Canada and North America the markets are too big and the manufacturer does the job themselves.

8. How did you identify the opportunity that led to the setting up of your Primary Business?

Generally there are a number of ways. You can have a good idea, but that wasn't it. I had a parts business and I thought, 'what have I got, what is in my hand and what do I need?' I had everything except for the car—because we had stopped making the cars. So the first thing was, can we get a car? We have the dealers, we have the systems and the rest of it, but didn't have a car. So I was fortunate enough to get Subaru.

Look at what you have in your hand and look at what your skills are and see if you can find something that matches. That is the simplest way. Going into a totally new area is flawed because you probably don't know the real drivers in that business. By the way, I found that cars were a great way of making money, particularly in the early years when the British manufacturers were not making good cars, but the Japanese were. They were making cars with all the bits in it like radios and sunshine roofs and all that stuff. We had to pay extra for that on a British car and the reliability wasn't good.

I looked at all the long term wealth which was in property. Generational wealth was in property and the world population was going up. The British population was going up and I liked the idea of property. There was a degree of permanence attached to it. That is why when I had a decent amount of money I started my own property company. At first it wasn't very successful. I soon realized you have got to have professional people who understand that

business. So I bought a publicly quoted company. I took it private in 1993 and that was the foundation of my property company which now accounts for probably 70% of our profits.

The profits come from rental income; we do some residential development, and we have a portfolio of around £600 million. Most of the properties are in England, some in America, some in Germany, I have a few in France which I regret because tax rates there are horrible. The tax rates are 75% and French property is not doing so well; Germany is okay; America is really good and so is England, mainly because of low interest rates. You are getting higher rental income and very low interest rates so there are good margins.

9. What were the critical elements you assessed before you decided to pursue the opportunity?

There were about 10 other people after Subaru at the same time the Japanese were coming into the UK. In fact, the government ended up putting import controls on them for a number of years. That also worked well because when you have an artificial shortage you can skyline the prices. The only thing is that our share of the quota, we were a bit late in the market, was a bit too small so I was always getting complaints from the dealers that we need more cars. I remember one year we turned over £16 million, I made £4 million net, a 25% net profit, which is unheard of. Of course, that didn't last forever.

10. How much time did it take from seeing the opportunity to the first day of operation?

In our case, because I had the basic infrastructure it was only months. I didn't have to make the cars. I had to launch them, advertise them, appoint dealers and stuff like that, so it was literally months. That is what we offer a manufacturer. It is quick access to the market and for them to do it it would take a couple of years. Most manufacturers now would use a private importer and then when it grows to be a significant size they would probably take it over themselves, that is one of the reasons I went into property as well, cars are a good way of making money, but there is no security. I had seen many of our industries go broke because global trading was increasing. I didn't want to be in manufacturing, particularly as Jensen had gone broke. I had seen the pain that causes when you get rid of a lot of people in the manufacturing industry. So I only wanted to sell things that somebody else had made. Property was a great way of keeping it and property also was a level playing field. It wasn't affected by currency fluctuations. You can't import a cheap property so you can't be undercut. My properties stood on the same level playing field as someone else. A Chinese company in Britain would have to pay the same for the land and to build it as I do, so that gave me a greater degree of stability in a rapidly changing global situation. Property was stable and that is one of the reasons I chose it.

11. If you had partners, who were they, and how did you find them?

In that case my partner was my former employer and therefore I was used to working with him. I saved him a lot of money. He pretty well gave me a free hand because he was in San Francisco and I was in England. As long as I kept turning in the results it was fine. I returned him nine times what he lost in Jensen Motors, so he was pretty happy with me. If I had lost him the money maybe I wouldn't have been there for too long. Basically he put in £3 million loan capital and the share capital was £40,000. Mine was £6,000 which was 15% of the equity, and over the years I just paid all the dividends to him and increased my shareholding by not taking a dividend. So it took me 12 years to actually buy him out. We got to a certain point and he didn't want to sell anymore, I had 25% and he said no I am not going to do anymore because his young sons were interested in the business. In fact, he wrote a book and it was called "I Never Looked Back", but when he wrote this book he said, when I sold those shares my sons told me it was the dumbest thing I ever did, but I never looked back. We were great friends until he died a few years ago at the age of 95. He was a lovely man and I always treated him with the greatest respect because he gave me the break.

12. Did you have a business plan of any kind?

It was evolving over time. I knew I wanted to be in the car business and that is why we got into Subaru. As soon as it was doing so well I said, let's get some others. There were some miracles along the way. For instance when I got Hyundai, the manufacturer Mitsubishi had a 15% share in Hyundai and they wanted to appoint the Mitsubishi distributor. But the chap who ran the Mitsubishi was not the nicest of people. The chairman of the Hyundai Motor Company come over and saw him and hadn't got on too well with him. He phones me up one day and says can I come and see you, he came and saw me and within a couple of days he said, I want you to look at the contract and within a week I was in Korea signing it.

With Isuzu, the other distributor had just started and he was going to go bankrupt and because we had a quota system in those days, we were about October or November and if we didn't order the cars and come that year then the quota would be lost and the dealer had gone bankrupt, so I signed up with Isuzu. I hadn't even seen the cars so I ordered the 1074 Isuzu Trooper and got them delivered before knowing too much about them, but I wanted that franchise. I was responding to situations, in terms of strategy, property was a deliberate strategy, I wanted to diversify into something that is not going to be subject to five year contracts.

13. What kind of financing did you have?

[See answer to Question #11 above.]

14. How much capital did it take?

[See answer to Question #11 above.]

15. How long did it take to reach a positive cash-flow position?

The first year was a £1 million turnover, and we made £200,000 profit so immediately I was in positive profit. But then as I acquired new businesses I had to put a letter of credit to buy cars from Japan and my partner did that, well I got the Bank of America to do it, but my partner was standing sort of guarantor, but after a while the guarantee fell away. One time when there was a bit of a financial wobble, not with the company but with the country, the Bank of America rang him up and said, we are thinking of calling the guarantees and he said to them, 'what guarantees?' That was not unlike this other situation where we owed the bank £400 million for my finance company—that was a disaster. We were taking £2 million losses a month on bad debts with the crash and I kept being asked to put in more and more money in by the bank. I put in up to £75 million and finally I said I am not putting any more in. You are either going to work with me to pay this off or here are the keys. So they saw the light of my suggestion and they worked with us. We have now paid it off completely, plus all the fees and charges that they wanted to lump on as well. The financial company was also a strategic move, but bad because the timing was completely wrong.

16. If you did not have enough money at the time of the start, or at low points in the business cycle, what were some things you did in order to stretch your capital?

Growing up in an era after the war there weren't credit cards and things like that in those times. I always liked keeping cash. I always carry cash in my pocket. Sometimes the credit card doesn't work for some reason if you are in a foreign company. I used to feel rich if I had money in my pocket, even if I was overdrawn in the bank. But if I had money in the bank but not in my pocket I felt poor. So I always like to keep a good margin of cash. With the business now there is plenty of cash. So when the cash came in 2008-2009 and the banks were saying, 'we need some more equity against your properties', we had the money to do it. We also had the money to go and buy some assets cheap, which we are now selling for very good profits. It was a time when cash was king, but also when the banks were in trouble then suddenly cash became a problem. At one time I had £100 million in HBOS [Halifax Bank of Scotland] and it looked like they were going broke and that would have been a serious problem for us. So you have to have this balance

of not all your eggs in one basket. When each business is independent, then one can't pull the other down.

So there is property business, car business, finance business, cash in the bank, individual car companies, etc. etc. So I am very cautious, I think that the liquidation of Jensen was a great impact on me. It showed me that getting rid of 1,200 people and closing down a factory is very painful. As I had mentioned I had to do some sacking of people I didn't even know. I had only been there three months and I had to get rid of half my staff. So that was a really impactful time for me. I never want to go through it again. I have always said that at the back of my mind there is the 'what-if question.' What if things went wrong? What is my escape plan? What is my safety net? So I am always looking forward but with one eye over my shoulder.

17. What did you perceive to be the strengths (up to 3) of your venture?

Flexibility, ability to adapt, a small tightly knit team who knew exactly what was expected of them. One time I was in India doing something and I picked up the phone and said I need you guys over here tomorrow, drop what you are doing and get on a plane and they were there. We treat them right. It is a family business and in many ways we treat them like family. I take them on holidays. We have a nice boat and I have had all my senior execs on the boat. When we had a good year one time we took about 300 people off to Spain for a holiday. Next year is our 40th anniversary and we are having a big party in London. We are probably going to spend £2 million on the party.

18. What did you perceive to be the weaknesses (up to 3) of your venture?

I think we are, because we balance out and we are cash rich, we are probably not too vulnerable, but the vulnerability is probably people. Because we have a small tightly knit team and if something happened to some of those key individuals that would be a problem. When you have a big company you have a lot of people coming up, but if we have only got 3-4 people at the top level the number 2 can't all be aspiring because then they would be waiting for the dead man's shoes. So the second tier very often are not necessarily real go-getters because if they were they would go. Some of my management are quite young, like 40 years of age. My son is 46, the head of my property side is 42, his next in charge is probably 35, but he is not going to wait until this guy is 65. So a weakness is keeping a good team of managers and keeping them motivated. The tax rates are so high now in Britain that when they get to a certain level it is almost not worth the bother anymore, but we can be a bit more flexible in that area. We can say look we are doing this property development here, why don't you buy a little stake in it with us, and then they can benefit from the capital gain. What I am trying to say is that we can be a bit more flexible in our remuneration policy, we can be flexible in terms of if you want to take a week extra off or something or other, or go shooting. They

have been down to Nice, or Monaco Grand Prix, we have a company plane so they can live a life that is a little less in a strait jacket than you could in a big company, so there are other benefits to working for a private company.

19. What was your most satisfying accomplishment or event?

Well I have had so many. Christian-wise I can tell you that an experience in Hong Kong was really a blessing to me. There was this teaching that the five-fold ministry was apostle, prophet, pastor, evangelist and teacher. The implication was that business and wealthy people were just there to give money. That is something I struggled with for a long time. And then suddenly I came across something that I could do that they couldn't do. It opened the door for a lot of people to receive the gospel. Also in our charity, Christian Vision, we are able to do things globally which no individual church would do because they are generally mainly interested in their own congregation. So having that resolve and being able to do things on a global scale from a charity, that is really satisfying.

I wish I could do more, I am wanting to do more, I would like to be better. One of the things about being a business person is that if you sell this many this year, you ask how many are you going to do next year. This is the same with charity. If I achieve this much I want to do more next year. I want to see how we can do better. How can we do more of it? How can we touch more people, so that is a big thing that is very satisfying but at the same time constantly finding myself challenged and wanting to do more.

On the company side I think just the most satisfying thing is seeing the growth of the company. Seeing things I have gotten involved with coming from nothing and growing to be really substantial companies and that stability. Having my son take over because generally there are a lot of difficulties with the son taking over from the father, because you know all the faults of your son. He is the guy who left the hammer on the lawn and damaged the lawn mower. He is the guy who is a bit forgetful. He is the guy who has got a Ferrari, but I didn't have a car like that until I was like twice his age sort of thing. There are all those things and you have this saying, 'muck to muck in three generations.' In other words you start with nothing, you make it, the next generation gets it and spends it and the third generation hasn't got it. It is very true because he has the disadvantage of growing up with wealth. So I still think about whatever I spend money on. For about 20 years of my business I was traveling economy class everywhere—there is a different mindset. When I grew up you didn't throw things out. I used to darn my socks. Now you throw them out and buy a new pair. So there is a different mentality and that is concerning. But I think he has risen to the challenge, he is doing a good job, so it is satisfying to see that I can pass that on to him.

20. What was your most disappointing situation or event?

We had a law suit with one of our manufacturers, basically being let down by some people that I didn't expect, that was disappointing, I don't know if I should say anything else.

21. Once you got going, what were the most difficult gaps to fill and problems to solve as you began to grow your company?

People was the biggest. For example, I was taking advice from a friend of mine and then he told me that as the business grows you pass different people's capabilities at different levels and you have to deal with that. So that is difficult and sensitive, particularly if those people have been loyal and stuck with you for years. Suddenly you are saying, 'you are no longer the appropriate person for the job.' How do you deal with this? We make enough money that we can afford to carry a little bit of fat, but when a recession comes along you can't afford to carry any fat and then that becomes really difficult. So some of these people have been with us a long time. I think about our computer manager, for instance. He was stuck in a different age with big main frames and all that stuff and he had to go. He had been with me like 35 years. Anyhow he was due to retire so we did a package, but he has gone away and he is still a bit bitter and that is sad. I wouldn't have wanted that but it was the right thing to do, we had to cut costs. We saved about £2 million in the computer department. It had just grown fat and was inefficient. Instead of buying off-the-shelf solutions we built everything on what we had started 30 years previous. It had been layer upon layer and every time you wanted to change this you had to change the whole structure. So there were much better solutions around but mentally he wasn't capable of grasping that.

22. What were the key attributes you looked for in people (partners, advisors, managers) as you grew the company?

Character, competence and loyalty. I don't like people who just jumped around here, there and everywhere. In the first few years of your career it is reasonable to jump, but when you are a senior executive you don't want to be changing jobs every 3 - 4 years. Personal recommendations are often really good, but not always. When I left Chrysler I had a guy who was a couple positions above me and my impression of him was oh, a great guy this chap. But over the years he then became available and I recruited him and I was very disappointed because this [earlier] perspective I had seen him as fantastic and now all of the sudden from this [later] perspective I hadn't really realized how much I had grown and really he wasn't the great star that I thought he was. He stayed with us a few years and then he retired and it was fine, but your perspective changes.

III. REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

23. What are some things that you have found to be most personally rewarding and satisfying for yourself as an entrepreneur?

I think being able to do things for other people with what I have. I enjoy that. My family in particular as well. For instance, I could give a family member £100,000 and to me it doesn't mean anything, it is a day's work, but to them it means they can buy a house. It changes their lives. That is wonderful. I love doing deals and I love being successful in those deals. I get a buzz out of that. It is not the money, it is the scorecard. It is like playing a game. Seeing the company grow. It is a little difficult walking away from some of those things but you have to be realistic. I had a couple of little health blips and that helps you focus your mind and say, you are not going to be here forever. You need to do the sensible things and position the company for the future and make sure you can deal with the inheritance issues for the kids and how do you structure that properly. So I have got a bit of time to do that, and I have been doing that.

I have always been aware of my own mortality. Even at a very early age, I used to walk through the carpark and say in 100 years' time who is going to know about this and who is going to care because everything we do here is just temporary. I have often thought on my death bed am I going to think about the last million dollars that I have made, or the little girl in the Philippines that I helped who has no legs, or the person in the prison who is dying of AIDS in Mozambique who I spoke to and became a Christian? What is going to really count is my family. So I think having a perspective and a sense of values.

I think I am very grateful for having what I have and being in a good position. A lot of people live very miserable lives. I have been very blessed. I am really grateful for everything I have got. I was delighted to marry Tracie 17 years ago. We have a wonderful life and I think how good that is. That is what I am most happy about. I have seen some terrible things, some girls who have been captured by ISIS. We have been to Iraq and North Korea and you realize just how fortunate you are. It is our privilege and our pleasure to be able to do something about it. It is a sweet and sour: sweet that you can do something for that person, but then you think about all the people you can't help.

24. What are ways in which you have developed your own entrepreneurial skills in order to be more effective as an entrepreneur?

We learn by pain and you stick your hand in the fire and you won't do it twice, if you are kicked twice by the same donkey, who is the donkey? I try not to make the same mistake twice. I learn a lot by my own mistakes. I also think I learn by the observation of others, my ex-partner for instance, I observed some of the things that he did that worked and some of the things that didn't work and I try and avoid doing the things that didn't work and no doubt my son will be learning some of the things I have done that didn't work. I have been to a few courses, you get a couple hundred car dealers in the room and ask if there are any questions and they really give a hard time, I quite enjoy that because it keeps you on your toes.

25. What are ways in which you cope with or manage the personal stress of being an entrepreneur?

I usually go quiet and think. I actually felt like I could manage any amount of stress you could throw at me. There was one time where something went seriously wrong and I couldn't sleep. That was one time. I remember I was on a plane coming home and someone gave me a valium and I never normally do that. But I did take that because I knew I needed to sleep. The thing that I find most stressful is personal relationships. Getting divorced years ago, that really hit my stress level and actually ever since then my ability to handle stress is much less. As you get older as well you probably get a little less patient, but up until the age of 45-48 I could handle all the stress you could throw at me.

26. What are the ways in which you have dealt with others who have disappointed you in business?

If it was a deliberate thing they have done, well I will never deal with them again. If it is just stupid, like they made a mistake, well I rather they admit the mistake. There is one guy, still works for me, he has given me on a number of occasions some wrong information, so now every time I double check it. If it is significant, he is a good guy but on a couple of occasions he has been a bit slap happy, and one time I made a mistake as a result of some wrong information I got.

27. What do you think are the most important personal traits (up to 3) for an entrepreneur and why?

Capability of course; mental agility to balance out all the different factors because rarely is the decision just one dimensional. I think people need a good name and a good reputation. It is often tempting to make a quick buck

and do something that we shouldn't do, but I will never deal with you again. So if you want to be there for the long term then be straight, be honest, be tough. I am tough, but when I agree to something, I agree.

28. What are the most important lessons you have learned with respect to starting and running a business that you pass on to an aspiring entrepreneur?

I would say, think it through. Make sure you know all the drivers because we think we do. I thought when I bought a property company that it was all about location, location, location, I pretty soon discovered that it is about timing and finance. If you are buying a property and let's say it is yielding 7% and your cost of money is 4%, then you are making 3% a year. If your return is 4% and the cost of borrowing is 7% you are losing 3% a year. You have got to get 3% capital growth before you even break even. We try to make sure right now in our portfolio that 70% of it is solid income and then we play with 30%.

IV. FAITH, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & THE MARKETPLACE

29. How do you describe the impact of your Christian faith in terms of how you find or define meaning in the context of your entrepreneurial pursuits?

It is no secret I am a Christian. My employees know that. They know I give money to Christian charity. One of the attractions for people to come and work for me is that I am not just using the money for myself. My employees can see that we are actually doing something good. It's like the story about the three builders. One chap was asked what are you doing, 'he said I am laying bricks.' The other guy was asked, 'what are you doing?' 'I am building this wall.' The third guy was asked and he said. 'I am building a cathedral.' They are all doing the same thing but they all had a different perspective on what they were doing. I like that people have a bigger perspective. From our company we are sending trips to Cambodia and people from across the company go, we raise money, gals are baking cakes, one guy is losing two stones of weight, and so on.

30. Who, if any one, affirmed your sense of direction in your entrepreneurial pursuits (as described in Question #29 above)?

I don't think it was anybody.

31. As a result of being a Christian entrepreneur, how has your approach to entrepreneurship changed?

You understand about entrepreneurship later on, you just do it to start with. In the early years it is a question of survival, I need to make some money and I don't even know I had heard of the word entrepreneur when I started—I just did it.

32. How did you (or do you) integrate your business/entrepreneurship expertise with your Christian commitment (and how are they complementary)?

I think we should use whatever skills we have for the Kingdom as well as business. Very often pastors feel you should give them the money and let them do it, but they don't necessarily have the skills. They have the people skills, but haven't got a clue about business. I have heard of so many pastors who are signing up mortgages and getting into debt. The church spends the next 10 years paying the debt off instead of meeting the needs of the community. They should involve business people. The danger for business people is they try and control the church through their finance. We need to try and avoid that. Very often if I give money for a church project I have said, I will match funds. It is your church, not mine. It is everybody's church. I don't want it to be just mine.

33. How have you been involved in your local church (that you now attend and the ones you have attended in the past)? (whether or not these are related to your business expertise)?

So in terms of the resources that I have, which is very substantial, it would have been 1,000 times our church budget and would be incredibly dangerous for me to give that money to the church. People who have big resources should do big things, people with small resources should do small things. The members of a golf club all pay for the maintenance of their golf club, so the members of a Church should support their Church. If you are a member of a small church and you can't raise enough money to fix the roof, please don't write to me. You would be better off to join a church with a few more people who see it as their responsibility to look after their own Church. I won't get involved in fixing your church roof.

With our programs we are spending up to £25 million in a year; no church is going to do that as a global thing. There are exceptions like the Alpha course, for instance, is a global thing. It is funded by businesses. I guess what I am saying is that I decided I want to do big things. I have a global mentality. I was born in India, I have spent time in Africa and I have traveled to the Far East a lot with my business, I have a perspective on what is going on in the

world, which my local pastor would not. How could he possibly oversee what I am doing?

So I decided a number of things. I will not build dependency. I heard what Rockefeller did in Central America. He supported a lot of churches, they grew and as soon as his support stopped they died, but the ones that had no support continued. So we do church planting, we train nationals and support them for a few years on a declining basis, and then we withdraw. We have given them the basic building blocks and so I try and bring in business principles. We sent Brazilians missionaries to Mozambique. My local church would have never done that. So we are bringing all our skills to bear. We have a radio station in Zambia.

Our charity is endowed. I have given it about £260 million which is about \$500 million Canadian. I said I would give it £300 million. It has been spending £15-20 million a year but still has more than I gave it because my property company invested their money in property and were living off the yields of that. So I endowed it so that even if I die the things we started can continue. So I am very anxious to make sure we don't create a monster. If they are running out of money, if my company had a bad year and we couldn't give them anything then we would have to stop everything, we haven't done that.

34. Have you been involved in your church denomination and how?

I have been an elder in the church. I left that church when I got divorced. My [first] wife was there and there were some issues. Yes, in fact, we have been registered as ordained ministers in Brazil. It is an honorary title because we have done so many projects with the Brazilians. There are 40 million Evangelicals in Brazil out of 180 million people.

35. Have you been involved in para-church organizations and how?

Christian Vision was founded in 1993. Christian Vision is a large international Christian religious organization in the United Kingdom, established in 1988. It is a registered charity under English law and in 2007 had an endowment of £200 million, making it one of the 100 largest charities in the UK.^[1] The charity has two complementary strategies: 'Touch a Billion' and 'Impact a Nation'. Touch a Billion uses media formats including radio, online TV, the internet, mobile phones and social media. Relationships are established through the major languages of the world which introduce people to Christianity. Christian Vision brings together content from a wide variety of organisations to demonstrate 'the value of knowing the real Jesus'. Impact a Nation projects work in the United Kingdom by training local leaders and carrying out activities with the intention of making a positive impact to society. These projects include education, healthcare, skills training, church development and humanitarian projects.

36. What are some examples [i.e. situations with partners, suppliers, customers, etc.] of how you have integrated biblical principles into your business practices and thus acted differently than a non-Christian due to your Christian faith?

I usually find there is an answer in Scripture for whatever you do. For instance, in customer relations, 'A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.' [Proverbs 15:1]. I used to get stuff out of the Japanese that other people wouldn't, there was this guy, he was a technical person, we wanted some money because we had some claims we had to deal with so I would often go to him and say. 'Mr. Oymatsu, you are the man in charge and I know you don't have to help me but I would ask you to consider it. If I could see he was going to say no, I would say don't answer me now I will come back tomorrow. That evening we are having dinner with the president of the company and when I saw Mr. Oymatsu I publicly recognized him in front of his president and treated him with proper respect. Other people found him to be a terrible person, but the next day I would always get pretty much what I asked for. The Scripture says, 'When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them.[Proverbs 16:7] So we can win around people by just understanding them.

Margaret Thatcher said something that was amazing. She said if you do a person a favour that they never can repay, you make an enemy for life. What she was saying was everybody in Europe we [the British] have either defeated or rescued. That is the reason the French hate us. We have had to rescue them twice and they feel beholden to us. That is why General de Gaulle never wanted us to enter the European Union. It is a very interesting statement. It is turning logic on its head.

37. What are the most important lessons (up to 3) you have learned that you believe are important for Christians pursuing entrepreneurship?

Don't automatically assume that Christians are going to be the best employees. If you have a good Christian they are the best—but don't assume that. One of the other aspects about being a Christian is you have a higher calling. Sometimes they mistakenly think that even though there is something really important for the business, there Church involvement comes first. Oh, I am singing in the choir, or whatever. Maybe the survival of the company is at stake, or something really critical, and sometimes this is a challenge. But the good ones are fantastic.

I think always I ask myself the 'what if' question. If everyone went into business expecting it to succeed, nobody went in expecting it to fail, but a high percentage fail, you have to ask yourself the question, what if it fails? What

am I going to do? What is my safety net? What is my plan B? I would always ask the what if questions and how far are you willing to let this go before you implement plan B.

I would separate all the businesses into different pockets. Never bribe God. Don't assume that just because you are a Christian you have got the right for it to work out. You have to work hard and you have to have the right ideas. Don't go into business just to fund the kingdom. Go into business because you have a good idea. I talked to some people a while back and they said oh we want to do this because we really want to get some money to fund the kingdom. I said look you are not business people and I promise you what you want to do is not going to work and you are going to lose your house. Well they did it and lost the house.

38. How could the church in a general sense (i.e. a local congregation) support you in applying your faith in the context of entrepreneurship?

Not very well. I feel like right now my pastor is supportive and he is there, but he can't understand it just like I can't understand half the problems he faces. There are not many Christian entrepreneurs in England, not many at all. In America and Canada there are a lot more, so it is a challenge.

39. What have been the most significant challenges for you as a Christian pursuing entrepreneurship?

One of the things is friendships. When you have nothing you have a friendship. Suddenly what happens is your [financial] ability changes and you can go to nicer places and they can't. You have left them behind. You are left with two choices. Do you change your friends to people who can go to your level? Or do you stay down at the level of where they can afford going to a low level budget place, or do you fund them to come to your level?

A good friend doesn't like to be bought. So that can be an issue. So navigating that and retaining your old friends is important. On a global basis many of our friends are not in England. They are our friends who work with us in our charities all around the world.

40. Who was most helpful (and why or how) in addressing these challenges: church leadership, Christian friends, etc.?

All the church leaders will do is pray for you, and that is great. I am looking to them for spiritual and pastoral covering. The higher you get in business the more rarified the air. I can't even talk to an entrepreneur who runs a plumbing company, how can he help me, I might be able to help him, but I am not sure he can help me. He probably doesn't understand international trade, he may understand the people issues and I understand his people issues. There was

a friend of mine, non-Christian, who has given me some good advice from time to time, but it is how to deal with people.

41. Have you hired people from your church? If so, has that been a positive or negative experience?

We have and it has been more negative than positive. Some of them actually I feel are a disgrace to us. When they don't show the same values that we do then it actually affects our testimony.

42. Have you done business with other people in your church and how?

Not generally, but sometimes I would sell them a car and do a good deal, but it is not me directly. The problem is I don't want to go to church on Sunday and have someone say, 'I have a problem with my car.' I don't want to do that. Church for me is a place of refuge, getting away, focusing on God and listening to the preacher. I don't want to have people approaching me about business. I want to get away from all that. I have had a lot of wacko schemes brought to me at church, though.

43. Has your relationship with those people you have done business with in your church been positively or negatively affected—from a business and spiritual standpoint—by doing business together and how?

[See response to Question #42 above.]

44. What do you believe are appropriate means to share your faith in your company?

Actions and words. By actions I mean treat people fairly and involve ourselves in their lives. This is not at all typical in England but we have a corporate chaplain in the company. He is a friend of ours. He works part time. I don't want to know what he is doing in any detail. He tells me that he is dealing with a lot of people.

We have had in the past kids from the school come and sing carols at Christmas time. I deliberately send out Christmas cards which say 'Merry Christmas' and I would put Scriptures in them. I am not going to allow people to squeeze us into privatizing our faith. So people know what we believe and I often mention what I believe. I once spoke to a whole bunch of non-Christians at the Council offices and I said to them what happens when you have got everything? I have everything that most people are aiming for: money, success and a beautiful wife. What happens when you have everything and it is not enough? When Rockefeller died they asked, how much did he leave?

Everything. We leave it all behind. So if I have everything you are aspiring for and I tell you it is not enough, you are aiming for the same and I would suggest to you there is much more to life than that. I am really keen on evangelism.

45. Is there any particular passage(s) of scripture that you have found particularly meaningful or that is inspirational to you?

The one I have is: 'Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.' [Proverbs 22:29] I guess it was referring to in those days that the wealthy people would come before the king. So I have that in my life. It has given me lots of opportunities and avenues into a whole different area of Christian faith. Being in the House of Lords as well, you meet everybody who has achieved something in life. I don't have the view that they are all wicked and horrible people. Many of them are good people and well intentioned I believe, just not necessarily seeing things in the same way I do.