

Shea determination to help

Employees 'feel taken for granted'

I DIDN'T GET WHERE I AM TODAY...

WHO? Trev Gregory
WHAT? Founder, Trade Right International

What does your organisation do? Trade Right International (TRI) is a social business based in Gourrock. It works with vulnerable groups, helping them to set up sustainable businesses and giving them the skills and resources to enable them to support themselves financially. At present, TRI is working with shea nut pickers in the north of Ghana and recovering drug and alcohol addicts in Greenock, Scotland.

What does your average working day involve?

I get up around 6.30am to read and prepare myself for the day before I reach the office in Greenock at 8.30am. My day almost always begins responding to e-mails received throughout the night from various partner organisations in African, Asia and the Americas. The afternoon and evenings usually consist of business meetings – often over in Glasgow or via Skype with our overseas employees. I try to never work past 9pm on weekdays – as the saying goes, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

First senior job?

It was 1984 and I was appointed director of youth work for a Christian charity in Hull called Youth for Christ. It was a job-share with my wife Denise, and it involved visiting church and council youth clubs across the north east, advising youngsters on drug, alcohol and self-esteem issues.

Do you work for love or money?

It has to be love. I'm driven by results, and by results I mean making positive changes to people's lives. Obviously money has a crucial part to play – but I make it work for me, rather than me for it.

Did you have a mentor?

Over the years I've had many mentors who have influenced me in different ways. My present mentor in business is Gordon Cowan of Gr8 Works in Ayr. I'm also an avid reader and two people who I admire most are Muhammad Yunus – the Bangladeshi economist who founded the Grameen microfinance bank, and the American writer and political activist Jim Wallis.

Any major turning points along the way?

In 2007 the charity I worked for sent me to Ghana to inform a community group that its funding was going to be stopped. The funds had been used by the group to send the local children to school, and so the implications were pretty bleak. I spent the 20-hour bus trip from the capital city to the village I was visiting thinking of alternative ways for the group to raise the funds they needed. On the way, I noticed hundreds of women carrying shea nuts, and when I finally reached the village I asked the community leaders what these women were doing. The conversation led to an in-depth discussion about Ghana's shea industry, and it was the initial motivation behind setting up TRI. Four years on, and the people in that



Trev Gregory's community interest company works with shea nut pickers in Ghana, and also has interests in Scotland

village are benefiting from TRI's shea nut business project.

What has been your biggest hurdle?

Getting people to understand that TRI is neither a business nor a charity. It is a Community Interest Company, which means it operates like a business, but the profits are used to meet social and ethical goals – funding community projects and initiatives in our partner countries.

Was your first job for pocket money or was it the first rung on the ladder?

Pocket money. I was 15 and I was employed by a local green grocer to carry sacks of potatoes from the shop to customer's cars. I did it every Saturday for three years before I was promoted to shop sales assistant.

What's the worst job you've had?

Unblocking toilets with my bare hands during a five-day youth conference in Holland. At the time I was director of the organisation that was hosting the event – there were 15,000 young people from 23 countries in attendance. Even when you reach the top of a business, you still have to muck in and get your hands dirty from time to time.

And the weirdest job you've had?

Being an honorary bishop in Liberia. If I'm honest, I'm not entirely sure what it entails. The "appointment" came about after I worked with eight Liberian families who had taken refuge in Ghana during the Liberian civil war. We helped them with

their return journey home and with their rehabilitation back into the community. I was made an honorary bishop as a result.

What did you want to be when you were growing up?

As a kid growing up in Nottingham I used to dream of being Robin Hood.

Any regrets?

Spending four years at university when I could have been out in the real world doing real things.

What would you change about your job?

People's attitudes. TRI aims to

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create businesses that are 100 per cent sustainable for the groups involved – often when we meet with potential donors to discuss funding opportunities, that percentage figure is met with cynicism. It is possible to achieve it, though.

Long hours or work-life balance?

I think I have a fairly good work-life balance. My wife and I have three grown up children and one lovely grand-daughter who we like to spend as much time with as possible. Admittedly it's not always been that way – I'm a bit of a recovering workaholic.

Confrontation or anything for a quiet life?

At work I'm confrontational, although I prefer to call it constructive criticism. I enjoy the quiet life at home though.

Ever stepped on anyone's toes along the way?

I've spent most of my life working for the voluntary sector where everyone's opinions are valued and considered. Yet all too often I've found these organisations encourage dependency and unsustainable work practices. I've stepped on people's toes because I want to find tangible, achievable and sustainable results – lots of people in the voluntary sector disagree with that.

If you met your younger self, would you give him a job?

Probably not – I think I'd be intimidated by him. I'd certainly be keen to develop a working partnership with him though and learn from him.

You've won the lottery: what do you do?

Expand TRI's projects and roll them out across the globe. At present, we work with a group of women shea nut pickers in Ghana and a men's rehabilitation project in Greenock – we have the enthusiasm and ambition to do much more, we just need funds to enable us to get there.

Your dream job?

The job I'm doing right now, but without all the bureaucracy and the budgeting.

MOST workers feel their boss takes them for granted or expects them to be grateful for having a job, according to a new study.

A survey of 1,000 adults also found that a fifth were putting in longer hours than before the recession, while a similar number had been hit by a pay cut or had taken on more responsibility.

Two-thirds of those questioned by recruitment firm Hyphen said a pay rise would help them stay in their job, although many wanted a better work-life balance or better ways of developing their career.

Zain Wadee, managing director at Hyphen, said: "Despite economic uncertainty, we are seeing substantial workforce mobility across the private sector in particular and a significant number of employers are still looking to hire. Employers need to focus on employee engagement to ensure they keep their best people, or staff who feel undervalued will consider moving job."

"Employee retention now deserves attention from employers. If not in a position to enhance pay packets, one powerful option is to maximise the benefits package offered to workers."

"Employers would be well advised to look at the overall experience of working in their organisation. Do their employees leave at a reasonable hour? Are they given the option to choose benefits to suit their situation? Are they engaged in discussions about steps to progress their career?"

"Employers should be speaking to their employees about what they want to get out of their job to help inform their retention strategy."

Agriculture tops work deaths list

AGRICULTURE is the most dangerous area of work in Scotland, according to new figures.

A report by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) shows that nine of the 15 workplace fatalities between April 2010 and March 2011 were in agriculture. Six of the fatal incidents involving workers on Scotland's farms were linked to transport issues, such as being hit by a moving vehicle, being trapped in an overturned vehicle and being injured in a quad bike incident.

Across the UK, the most common cause of serious and fatal injuries in agriculture involves moving and overturning vehicles.

The total number of Scottish fatalities at work has fallen from 23 in 2010 with eight in the agriculture sector.

National Farmers Union Scotland president Nigel Miller said: "If we are to turn around our industry's tragic record for deaths and injuries, then farmers and their staff need to change their mindset when it comes to safety on farm."

"The dangers and risks associated with farming are a permanent part of everyday life on a farm and will not change."

"However, what must change is the way those working in the industry regard the health and safety of themselves, their family and their workers."