



We chat to Scott Hider, the successful head of Nationwide Exhibitions and part-time DJ about what makes him tick

What do you currently do?

I'm the Managing Director of Nationwide Media Group. Based in Bristol, we have 25 years experience running and managing major exhibitions, conferences and events in both the business and consumer markets. Our three annual business shows are some of the largest and most successful in the UK with thousands of business leaders participating and visiting. Our events have grown in successive years and have become major events in the local business calendar. We secure high profile speakers and put together programmes of seminars which are invaluable for SMEs. We are experts in the planning and delivery of large

events, and also have a conference and event management division that offers, organises and hosts events for third party organisations.

Right now the whole team is in 'sales mode' for the business shows. A large percentage of SMEs are re-booking for our shows. It's hard for me to think any other way than sales. I started my career in advertising sales at the age of 17 and moved into the exhibition market at 18. It's good to see that the exhibition I first worked on is still going strong today with two shows a year. I then started my own publishing company before moving back to my passion of organising exhibitions for a company called Nationwide Exhibitions. Most recently I came

back to the company as Managing Director after becoming majority shareholder in the company and re-branded it Nationwide Media Group.

I totally buy into the phrase of 'work hard, play hard'. Each year after the shows have finished in November I go to Thailand and relax with friends. I've been a music artist for 15 years and so use this time abroad to DJ around the islands. Organising the shows is hard work and for several months I am totally focused on making them the best possible. Travelling gives me the opportunity to re-charge my batteries so when I come back in January I am ready for the year ahead.



Who is your inspiration in business?

There are a lot of entrepreneurs that are very successful in their own fields, but my father has been the greatest inspiration to me personally. As a self made car dealer, he traded at the same site for 30 years and sold over 10,000 cars. He rode out two recessions and I have the utmost respect for him. When I was younger I would clean the cars at his dealership and watch with fascination at how he ran his business.

I've always worked in advertising sales and the media but my father showed me what it takes to be a naturally good sales person. He had the drive to be the best at everything he did and worked hard to achieve it. Like me, he never wanted to work for other people, he wanted to be his own boss. My father injected an entrepreneurial element in me and was also the first person to call me an entrepreneur.

Whom do you admire?

I admire anyone who has a positive attitude and puts lots of energy in to what they do. I look at a homeless person that is trying to better his life by selling the Big Issue in exactly the same way as an entrepreneur driving around in a Bentley. Both are working hard to make a success of what they do and are willing to put in the hard work to achieve it. When I interview new recruits, for example, one of the main things I look for is the drive to succeed.

In the music world I admire the likes of P Diddy and Jay-Z because they are very successful at what they do. P. Diddy is more than just a musician, he's an entrepreneur. He has fought some tough battles in his life but has achieved a great deal across a range of differ-

ent industries. He's got his own fashion line, a perfume, a record label and is also an actor. Now that's what I call being entrepreneurial.

Jay-Z is a prime example of someone who doesn't listen to his critics and is very successful at what he does. Last year at Glastonbury the press said it was rocking the boat for a hip hop star to headline at Glastonbury. But on the night the crowd loved his performance and he got some great reviews. In business, launching a new product or service, or expanding into new markets, often brings out the critics. People tell you that things will never work. But if you didn't try new things then you would never succeed. Take advice from those around you, however at the end of the day you have got to trust your own instincts.

Looking back, are there things you would do differently?

Looking back can be costly because you miss out on opportunities that are right in front of you. To me regret, jealousy and envy are wasted emotions. It's much better to focus your efforts and energies on building a great business for the future. That doesn't mean you shouldn't evaluate your past performances. I always say it's important to learn from your mistakes, but it's even better to learn from other people's.

What defines your way of doing business?

I've coined the phrase 'social credit'. Essentially, it is about networking and working together with a range of partners to achieve greater goals. For our business shows we have come up with a package called the 'Marketing

Propeller' where exhibitors receive a range of tools to maximise their profiles before, during and after our events. We have pulled together big names such as Google to offer exhibitors £11,000 worth of free marketing services. The providers benefit because we are offering them the channels to generate potential future business. Our exhibitors get a useful suite of services for free. Most importantly, many SMEs have very little time to market themselves so we bring everything together under one roof. We benefit because it raises the profile of our business shows even further.

Some may call this approach old fashioned, but I don't see anything wrong with that. It goes back to the old way of trading through barter and doing people favours.

What would you say to businesses who are worried about tough times ahead?

It's never been more important for businesses to keep their finger on the pulse and market themselves aggressively. The economy will recover in time and now is the time to prepare for the upturn. The businesses that are proactive now will prosper in the long run. SMEs need to take advantage of all the marketing tools available to them. If they don't then their nearest competitor will have an edge over them in 2010. My advice to business owners is get out there, market yourself and network. As I mentioned earlier, my father's business survived and thrived through two recessions. With the right planning and keeping close to your business any entrepreneur should be able to do the same.

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