



Business insight

With Father's Day this month, we turn the spotlight on leading businessmen in the county and ask them about success, inspiration and what makes them tick



Andrew Hillier Hillier Consulting / Ballinger Equine

Summarise your business achievement:

Following an eventful career in government and the corporate sector, I set up Hillier Consulting and now advise start-ups and companies on corporate communications, branding and crisis management. Last September, Dr Susanna Ballinger and I launched Ballinger Equine, which has quickly become the region's fastest-growing equine veterinary practice. I suppose I enjoy doing what others tell me can't be done.

Do you have any memorable career moments?

Being thrown in at the deep end early in my career and briefing Margaret Thatcher was certainly instructive! And managing media and communications at Westminster for the funeral of Diana Princess of Wales was an honour. More recently as communications

director, turning around an underperforming charity with empty care home beds and sheltered housing vacancies into a first-choice provider with long waiting lists has been rewarding.

Who do you find inspirational?

Sir Ernest Shackleton triumphed in extraordinary adversity and led his crew to eventual safety. And Amelia Earhart didn't let the chauvinism of her time prevent her from challenging the status quo and setting an example to us all.

What do you do away from work?

I enjoy being outdoors in the countryside, the wilder the better; give me a horse to ride and it'll be perfect. Otherwise I'm a petrolhead, I follow motorsport and enjoy riding my motorbike.

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Neil Dunn Planet Furniture

Summary of achievement/who you are:

Growing and developing the business so that it's a sustainable family business.

What is your proudest achievement to date?

Winning the Hertfordshire Business Awards for 3 consecutive years and in the third year winning Best Business Person of the Year Award.

What did you want to be when you were growing up and did you ever get close to that dream?

I always wanted to make things. I was fascinated with how things worked, how things were put together.

When I started my working life as a self-employed kitchen fitter I became fascinated with craftsmanship and building things people loved. As I progressed I became determined to build my own company and create my own range of bespoke furniture. So, yes you could say I'm living that dream!

What's your favourite quote?

"All good things come to those who wait."

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Tom Williams Maydencroft

Summary of achievement/who you are:

With a degree in Landscape Management, in my mid 20's I saw a space in the market for a rural construction company focused on doing the best job with the most skilled people. I set up Maydencroft Ltd in 2007 with a team of just three - that commitment to quality paid off, we now employ 100 people, and cover a huge variety of sectors.

What is your proudest achievement to date?

The success of our apprenticeship scheme, and our continual training of new skills and traditional rural craftsmanship for the Maydencroft team, means that everyone feels they can be at the top of their game. I have so much respect for the people who work here. I am still very much involved in recruitment and I enjoy getting to know every one of our employees. We are the largest rural employer in Hertfordshire.

What did you want to be when you were growing up and did you ever get close to that dream?

I loved my childhood on our farm, and wanted it to be my future but my father said not to rely on farming. The success of the business has given great security for the farm. Seeing our majestic English Longhorn cattle grazing across Hertfordshire's wildlife meadows gives me great pleasure, as does providing the highest quality beef from our traditional, natural way of farming.

What's your favourite quote?

"Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome." Arthur Ashe

Maydencroft Manor, Gosmore, Hitchin SG4 7QA ♦ T. 01462 420851
www.maydencroft.co.uk ♦ www.maydencroftmanor.co.uk for buying our beef



Christopher Wharton Wharton Goldsmith

Summary of achievement/who you are:

I am a fully trained Goldsmith and Jewellery Designer having done a five year apprenticeship in the old fashioned way. I started my own business back in the late 70's selling my own designs of rings and fine jewellery to retail jewellers throughout the UK and Ireland. In 2002 we took over our current retail store in George Street St Albans from my brother Stuart Wharton. I am now a Freeman of Goldsmiths Hall and The City of London. Our eldest son Sam, also a fully trained Goldsmith/Designer, joined us in 2000. He is now a Director of the company.

What is your proudest achievement to date?

My proudest achievement is to have received De Beers Diamond Design Awards over twelve consecutive years during my time supplying the jewellery trade.

What did you want to be when you were growing up and did you ever get close to that dream?

When I was growing up I always wanted to make things and to travel.

What's your favourite quote?

"Hard work is a prison sentence only if it does not have meaning"

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