

SUBC Engineering's Colin Burney sees TAB being an intrinsic part of the company's future plans

ONE THING THAT COLIN BURNEY OF SUBC ENGINEERING HAS IS RESILIENCE!

Originally from the Bolton area, Colin moved to Aberdeen in 1980 to work off-shore, but nearly 40 years on he still retains his warm Lancashire accent!

From his 30s Colin had wanted his own business, and started his first one, a bubble-gum venture, in 1986. "It was a disaster, but I learnt so much from the experience," admitted Colin, and it prompted him to study for a business degree and learn much more about management and running a business.

Finally in 2009 Colin started SUBC, provider of subsea personnel, projects and training, and reached an impressive £9 million turnover by 2014. At that time he had a team of 15 people who covered the key business functions, and Colin's day-to-day job was being MD and managing the business.

During SUBC's growth period Aberdeen was untouched, unlike the rest of the country, by the recession and global financial crisis, due to rapid increase in oil prices. However, in 2015 that bubble burst as the huge slump in the price of oil hit, and many Aberdonian companies had to make significant cutbacks or go out of business.

Colin had seen the oil slump in the mid-80s, and was determined to keep SUBC going through this one. "Although I knew I could liquidate and start again, morally that just didn't feel the right thing to do," said Colin, so he did what he needed to do to survive.

Turnover plummeted, employees had to reduce hours and be let go, but leases and overheads still had to be paid, so this wasn't an easy time for Colin. He went back to pretty much doing everything himself.

"Stupidity kept me going," laughed Colin – but the reputation he had worked hard on was also a big contributor to building up his business again.

"When I heard about TAB and had a meeting to find out more, something really sparked my interest. I felt isolated and trapped and wanted some moral support – it seemed TAB could help with that."

4 years on from the oil slump, SUBC are now at £2.1m turnover with 8 on-shore employees, and Colin is feeling positive about the future. He works closely with his TAB facilitator who has provided "fantastic" advice on some business opportunities and with future plans, and Colin sees the role of TAB as being an intrinsic part of that.

"There's no doubt that being a Member of TAB has saved me money. My TAB Board Members have given me advice and suggested things I might do that I would never have thought of myself. What I really like is that everyone is so open. There are no clashes, no one competes, everyone just wants to help one another ... and importantly, it all stays in the room!"

"I don't like to burden my wife with business issues, so having TAB where I can share my concerns, knowing I will get a different perspective is a no brainer for me," commented Colin.

Colin's motivator in life is not about money (although that's clearly important); he gets a real satisfaction from developing people and seeing them thrive and succeed.

