

OUT OF THE QUESTION

The ice-man cometh

Robert May, Managing Director of RAMSAC LTD, talks about retiring to a bird reserve, being the new James Bond and how a former boss once upset him with an ice cream.

CRN: Describe your job.

I have three roles really. Firstly I'm the MD, dealing with the running of the business from a strategic perspective. Secondly I'm a customer, facing and advising on appropriate technology. Finally I work with clients as their outsourced IT director. I love this bit of the job, getting inside other businesses and helping them grow their IT in line with their business aspirations.

What was your first job?

I once spent a summer holiday cleaning out industrial heating systems, which was, well, different. My first real job was in IT training, teaching accountants how to use a spreadsheet.

How much did it pay and was that fair?

The heating job paid peanuts, although I do remember they gave a weekly allowance for a new pair of jeans as the cleaning fluids would destroy a pair in one week flat. The IT job paid £6,000 a year... But no free jeans.

Who's the worst boss you ever had?

I worked for a director once who was incredibly tight. I remember going to a client meeting down on the coast. My boss and I walked down to the seafront and saw an ice-cream van. He offered to buy me an ice cream and then ordered himself a double whippy with flake, then, without asking, he ordered me a single whippy with no flake!

How did you get into IT?

By accident. I was doing a degree in business and finance, which required a business to sponsor me for four years. I wrote to every company advertising in the Sunday Times job section and it just so happened that an IT company decided they wanted to sponsor me.

Are there any companies you wouldn't work for?

I couldn't work for any organisation that wouldn't allow me to stick my nose in. I remember being frustrated in a role where I would see business problems with seemingly obvious solutions, but not being allowed to do anything about it because 'it wasn't my job or my department'.



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What would you have done if you hadn't gone into IT?

The computer thing was just another hobby, which happened to come in very useful when I started to work. That said, when I've made my millions (surely it's only a matter of time?) I'd like to run a bird reserve and spend my days outside with nature.

What's the secret of a successful career?

Life balance and the ability to listen. Larry King once said "I've never learned anything while I was talking".

Who has been the best James Bond? Who should be the next one?

Sean Connery, although I love the fact that Bob Holness was the first ever James Bond on the radio. Obviously I'd give it a go they asked me!

Which is the most dynamic and inspiring IT vendor?

Microsoft gets such bad press yet most of it has to be rooted in jealousy. They're massively successful for a very good reason – in my book that has to be respected.

Does Bill Gates get a fair press?

No, of course he doesn't. I was in meeting which Bill Gates attended, there were probably 20 Microsoft resellers discussing different elements of the industry and MS products. Bill stood and listened taking it all in, I doubt he said more than half a dozen sentences but they were all inspired.