



FIVE-MINUTE INTERVIEW



Barrie Desmond VADition

MicroScope puts its questions to **Barrie Desmond**, business development director at VADition

What is the best/worst advice you have received and from whom?

The best advice I received was to concentrate on being good at what you do and good things will happen. This advice has served me well.

People who concentrate on bolstering the share price or are driven by targets or career progression may have short-term success but not longevity. Share price, revenues and career progression will all improve if you concentrate on just being good.

The worst advice is being told you can trust someone in business – probably the worst advice anyone can accept. Always get it in writing – trust me.

What is the best book you have ever read?

From a business perspective it is *The one minute manager meets the monkey* by Kenneth H. Blanchard and William Oncken, where the monkey is the problem and the book looks at how both managers and subordinates always try to offload the monkey. I'm the monkey if they do that now!

On a personal level, it has to be *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt, which is just a great humbling read.

Tell us something most people do not know about you

Most people seem surprised that I still go to church. They cannot seem to reconcile a normal lively chap kneeling on pews on a Sunday. I'm no bible

basher, just a couple of times a month with my boy. I tell people I'm a good golfer but to be good at golf you need to practice. I also tell them I'm a good person but to be a good person, yeah you got it, I need to practice.

I also shoot (live game shooting), but it is something I don't broadcast as I never know how people will react.

What temptation can you not resist?

I am hopeless at resisting anything my children ask for, especially with those puppy dog faces. Just part of being a parent I guess.

What is your most elusive goal?

I am not really driven by goals, but my goal at VADition is to make it as successful as it can be just by being honest and hardworking. Okay, then there is the lottery win – very elusive. And the slight attraction of working in Silicon Valley for a couple of years.

Where is the one place you would like to visit before you die?

Where do I start? Wembley to see Manchester City in a cup final, and probably Australia on the British Lions tour. But something that is always on my mind is to work with a charity in a really needy place such as Africa or India and get involved in helping out. Maybe I could achieve my goal and do this at the same time by working for the Bill Gates Foundation – I'll be available in three years, Bill, if you are reading this!

What do you just have to do before you die?

Fulfil the above, and go to the place where they filmed *The Beach* with my wife. I have never been further east than Rome so it would be an adventure.

Which bit of technology would you want with you if you were stranded on a desert island?

An iPhone, so I could be entertained and download the survival app – what an idea.

Who helped you get to where you are today?

The list is too long – I have a lot of friends in the business. Some I must mention are Neil Ledger and Ian Morris at VADition (and equiP and Data Connectivity before) who have always been mates of mine and very helpful. Before that, and he still helps, is my old mate Bert Whyte, originally from Newbridge Networks – my mentor really. I've been inspired by Steve Jobs too – he's a bit of a contrarian, much like myself I think.

What was your first car and how does it compare with what you drive now?

My first car was a pretty basic lime green Vauxhall Cavalier. A gypsy woman told me it was an unlucky car after I refused to buy a sprig of heather off her – a week later I wrote it off. Today, I guess it is pretty predictable – another four-door saloon, Mercedes, silver not green, but this one has all the toys.

What do you believe in most?

Simplicity, having fun, being good and being happy. Luckily I have had a career where what I like doing is also my job. If the fun stops it is time to move on – unless you get moved on beforehand.

Do you have any pets? If so, what are they and what are their names?

We have a couple of springer spaniels, Red and Indigo. We also have a cat called Mr Black. All colours you might notice – we've had a Silver and two Blue Boys previously.

If you could be someone else for a day, who would you be and why?

Not really my scene this one, although I would like to be on the board at Google for a day and ask them why they are deliberately trying to dislodge Microsoft as the most disliked company in the world – puzzling really.

Who would you least like to be stuck in a lift with?

George Osborne or David Cameron – Tory toffs.

Describe yourself in one sentence

Have you ever spoken to me? A sentence lasts a lunchtime! I'll have a go though: fun and fearlessly passionate.

Why are you good at your job?

I have a clear vision and I am determined. I live by the philosophy: I may be wrong but I am not confused.

If you could be any animal for a day, what would you be?

A bird. I am still fascinated by flight, and like most people I still stop and look up at a low flying aircraft.

If a grizzly bear and a silverback gorilla decided to have a no holds barred fight, which would you put your money on and why?

The gorilla every time for its explosive amount of energy. By the time the grizzly got up on its hind legs the silverback would have smashed him up.

Do you prefer cities or countryside?

I love them both – the energy and variety of the city, and the fresh air, openness and lifestyle of the countryside.

Working and living in London in the week and returning home to Wales for the weekend allows me to enjoy both.

Describe your perfect night out

A few beers with my wife and friends around the local pubs followed by a steak or Indian.

What would be your perfect holiday?

Skiing and sunshine together. We took up skiing late and fell in love with it, but I also like the pool and sun, so somewhere that would cater for both in a luxury chalet or hotel would be ideal.

Sum up the IT channel

The channel is like the film *Forest Gump* – it has a bit of everything: drama, violence, ego, passion, the will to win, shocks, deception, exhilaration and hypocrisy, and "you never know what you're going to get" but as long as you understand the egos you won't go far wrong. ●