

# STEVENS SUPPLY CELEBRATES 15 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY

Bobby Stevens set up Stevens Supply in Dubai over 15 years ago. *Pipeline Magazine* speaks to him about how it all began and what the future holds



**Pipeline Magazine: Why and how did you set up Stevens Supply?**

**Bobby Stevens:** Having my own business had been a lifelong dream of mine. When I first arrived in Dubai in the early 1990's I was amazed at the amount of business opportunities Dubai provided. I said then "There are a million ways to make a million dollars in Dubai. You just have to find one." I came to Dubai with a US based oil service company as a field engineer and had moved into a sales position before starting out on my own. An oil and gas related business was the natural choice and even though I now have a diverse range of business ventures, oil and gas is still the most important one and is still by far my favourite.

**PM: What were the main challenges you faced and how did you overcome them?**

**BS:** My biggest challenge was beginning a business so undercapitalised. I now look back and laugh at myself as I am sure a lot of people were doing at that time. That I was so naive or audacious to really believe I could start and succeed with this type of business, with so little capital is laughable, but in the end I not only survived but excelled and for that I am extremely grateful and proud.

**PM: What do you feel have been your main achievements over the last 15 years?**

**BS:** There have been many achievements over the past 15 years. The first five years were all about survival. With time comes credibility and I knew that going into it but I had no idea it would take as long as it did to really get established. As long as you are in the game you still have a chance of winning the game and that was my initial strategy.

Staying in the game. People and corporations within all industries like to stay with what they know and change comes slowly. No one gave me a blank cheque but a few did give me a chance. I was able to prove my company's value to them and as you know this is a very small industry. Word travels fast, good or bad and Stevens Supply became recognised as a company that you could count on for superior service and products. We achieved the success we enjoy today one step at a time, over a long period of time.

**PM: Why do you think you have been successful?**

**BS:** I think those that have succeeded in business possess a lot of the same or similar traits. For me Drive, Desire, Determination, Dedication and Sacrifice are essential for success. If you think luck is the way forward then buy a lottery ticket. You cannot count on luck in business. I think the main reason a lot of people fail in business is that they are not willing to make the sacrifices required to succeed. I do not like to play the violins a lot, but for me it was sleeping on a camp stretcher in my warehouse, pouring five gallon buckets of water over my head for a shower for two years because I could not afford any other accommodation. A lot of people suggested that I give up and "get a real job" but I was determined and that determination paid off in the end.

**PM: Where do you see Stevens Supply in the next five years?**

**BS:** The crystal ball is cloudy at the moment for all things oil and gas. We have been affected by the collapse in the market like everyone else. I do consider ourselves to be fortunate to be in the region we are in

but even with the level of activity remaining relatively strong, there obviously has been a focus on reducing spending across the board. We as a company are very well positioned for a prolonged downturn and continue to grow in spite of current market conditions. We have recently signed exclusive Agency Agreements with two major manufacturers with two more currently in the final stages of negotiations. I am very confident and optimistic about not only the next five years but the next fifteen and beyond and all the challenges and opportunities for success they will bring.

**PM: Do you have any plans to expand your geographical footprint?**

**BS:** At the moment no. We have ongoing operations in Muscat, Mumbai, and Singapore. There is a chance we will establish another presence in South East Asia but that is yet to be confirmed.

**PM: What is the biggest lesson you learnt from setting up a business?**

**BS:** I have learned so much it is impossible to point to one situation or experience and classify it as the biggest lesson. I have made my share of mistakes but have managed to get it right far more than I got it wrong. I am very grateful to the people of the oil and gas industry for the support they have shown me over the years. It is a relatively small, close knit group of people, providing the most widely traded commodity on the planet. I consider myself very fortunate to have chosen this as a career and to be a member of such an elite group. This Industry and the people of it have given me a way and means to support myself and provide for my family for over 35 years and for that I am eternally grateful.

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