



DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

Former Army lieutenant finds success through multiple business endeavors.

by Colin McGuire

To most, film production and engineering may not have all that much in common. But to 58-year-old Peter Wolvelaerd, there couldn't be a more profitable group of professions.

"I come from a family in which everyone owned businesses," he said. "I learned that there are two kinds of people in this world: People who just collect a salary, and people who own a business."

Wolvelaerd knows more about the latter. The part-owner of Scottsdale, Ariz.-based Sun Devil Productions, a film production company that has been in operation for only 22 months, and owner of VanDahl Engineering, a company that specifies in everything from building repairs to electronic security surveillance, for nearly 20 years, the former first Lieutenant in the U.S. Army has business in his blood.

"I started (VanDahl Engineering) as a part-time job," he explained, adding that at the time, his full-time job was working as a sales engineer for an electric company.

"But when we started to turn profits, I was able to hire more people, and we came across a lot of new projects. It was a perfect storm."

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

Being at the helm of two different businesses, Wolvelaerd has seen his share of ups and downs. In fact, considering how young his film production company is, he is quick to acknowledge how much time it takes to see a business become successful.

"Right now, business for Sun Devil Productions is going poor and slow," he said. "But I've always worked under the theory that it takes three years to turn a profit. We have another year-and-a-half before we will be able to see anything. My biggest asset is my time, at this point. You have to use yourself as a primary resource when starting a business."

Though he says business for his film production company may be slow, it wasn't too long ago that he was able to ►



COMPANY
SUN DEVIL
PRODUCTIONS

LOCATION/HEADQUARTERS

Scottsdale, Ariz.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES 6

NUMBER OF VETERAN EMPLOYEES 1

WEB SITE

www.sundevilproductions.com

YEAR FOUNDED 2008



VETREPRENEUR

PETER VAN WOLVELAERD

MILITARY SERVICE

U.S. Air Force, 1975-1979

U.S. Army, 1980-1984

HIGHEST RANK ATTAINED

First Lieutenant (O-2)

NaVOBA MEMBER SINCE

2009

FAVORITE TV SHOW

"Two and Half Men"

FAVORITE SPORTS TEAM

New York Yankees

FAVORITE MUSICIAN

Beach Boys

DREAM CAR

BMW

WHAT DO YOU DO TO RELAX?

Listen to music

WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF

YOU WEREN'T A BUSINESS OWNER?

Coach of a sports team

► coordinate a major event for his Sun Devil Productions résumé. Along with Arizona State University and his partner, Professor Miguel Valenti, Wolvelaerd was given full access to film ASU's 2009 Commencement Ceremony, a ceremony that featured President Barack Obama as speaker.

"It was very serendipitous," he said when asked about how he was allowed to move forward with the project. "We contacted both the White House and the university, but both were very resistant at first. With a lot of persistence, and a lot of time, we were able to get a little lucky. It was a nice set of circumstances for us."

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

Wolvelaerd is confident that his latest business venture will eventually see some of the same success VanDahl Engineering has seen over the years. He noted that a lot of success in business comes through perseverance when the going gets tough.

"You can't quit on the product or else you won't see success," he said. "I want to be a job creation engine. When I turn profits, I want to hire more people, rather than take the money for myself."

Without his time in the military, he said, there would have been no way his business ventures would have even been made possible.

"I learned a lot of teamwork, discipline and organization skills," he said, reflecting on being in the U.S. Army. "You are given a mission, and it (being in the military) teaches you how to practice and complete the mission. I learned to have a can-do attitude, and to run a successful business, you really need to have a can-do attitude. It was the greatest experience of my life." ■



Sun Devil Productions' Clients

- Arizona Jewish Historical Society
- Arizona Kidney Disease and Hypertensive Care
- International Rescue Committee
- ASU Parents Association
- ASU Foundation

Did you know?

Sun Devil Productions earned the 2009 Best of Scottsdale award in the Motion Picture and Video Production category by the U.S. Commerce Association in Washington, D.C.

