



Karl Hartey

From milking shed to Monte Carlo, the man behind Oswestry's Hartey Wealth Management is an inspiration to budding entrepreneurs. By Catherine Waterfall

What was your first experience of working life?

At age 16 I joined the Army as a junior in the Royal Artillery. However, I found army regulation and discipline very difficult. Also, I have no coordination. One day the sergeant called me aside to tell me I couldn't march. To teach me how to come to attention, he made me lift my leg and salute over and over again. After three hours my right knee gave way and I was taken to Woolwich Hospital. Because of the damage to my knee, I was signed out of the Army for medical reasons. I then started labouring on south Shropshire farms, collecting eggs, milking cows and ploughing fields, as this was all I was qualified to do. I had to get up at 3.30am, do 100 hour weeks and was paid £1.50 an hour.

How did you become a financial advisor?

When I was 23 I saw a job for Sun Alliance in the job centre. I went along, got the job and for the next nine months I just worked and worked. But within a short time, I was the leading sales guy. I then had a couple of bad experiences with employers going bust, so in March 1992 I set up Applewood Associates in our back bedroom in West Felton. I wanted to be in control of my own destiny. The first three years were tough but by offering a good service, the business eventually took off. Fifteen years later, our business was very successful.

What is the Charlotte Hartey Foundation?

In July 2009, my daughter, Charlotte, passed away at the age of 16 having been wrongly diagnosed with swine flu. Her friends wanted to do something so ordered 2,000 wrist bands and raised £4,000 outside shops. This was the starting point for the foundation. Six years on, the money just keeps coming in. We think carefully about where Charlotte would want the money to go. We want to help smaller causes, especially if they're youth orientated. We helped one boy travel to Canada for six months, another girl is going to Albania for a year to help with a Christian charity and we've also helped the St Martins scouts. I think Charlotte would have been proud that her name continues and of the people we've helped. I was sorting through some pictures of her the other day and the one thing we always say about Charlotte is that we miss her beautiful smile. She never stopped smiling and through the foundation, we're able to help other young people smile.

How do you switch off from work and the stresses of life?

After Charlotte died I lost my passion for work. A company came along and offered to buy Applewood, so we sold the business and my wife, Helen, and I took a sabbatical. We took part in the prestigious Gumball 3000: 120 supercars travelled 3,000 miles from Copenhagen, through Stockholm, Helsinki, St Petersburg, Warsaw, Vienna and finally to Monte Carlo. Few people have driven a car through Russia as car-jackings are not uncommon. We had armed police at the front and back of our convoy and weren't allowed to stop. However, I stopped to help a fellow driver with a flat tyre and we got left behind and lost. Our sat navs didn't work in Russia, so I had to call the UK to get directions to our hotel in St Petersburg. It was a frightening but unbelievable experience. In 2014 we did the Miami to Ibiza rally and we've signed up to do another Gumball 3000 this year. I love the adventure. I don't want to be an old man in my rocking chair with no stories to tell.

What is your business philosophy?

I started to get excited about business again a couple of years ago and joined Hartey wealth management with my son, Tristan Hartey. Our growth over the past 12 months has been incredible. As well as the office in Oswestry, we've just opened a branch in Chester. Instead of trying to create a huge business with thousands of clients, we're building a smaller practice that is more relationship driven, looking after multiple generations of one family. This gives us more time with our clients and they become a part of our extended family.

What advice do you have for someone planning to launch a business?

Find somebody who is already running a business in your chosen field, take them for a coffee and talk to them. The advice you get, even in just a few minutes, could be invaluable. If you want to be successful, you have to emulate successful people.

For financial advice, visit: www.harteywm.co.uk

The Charlotte Hartey Foundation

For more information, or to make a donation to the Foundation, visit: charlottehartey.com