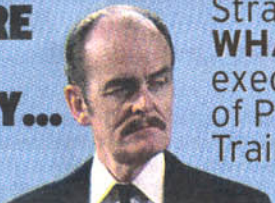


# Well-oiled career putting people first

**I DIDN'T GET WHERE I AM TODAY...**



**WHO?** Murray Strachan, 39  
**WHAT?** Chief executive of Petrofac Training

## What do you do?

I have ultimate responsibility and accountability for the performance of Petrofac Training, which was established in February 2004 and provides training, training management and specialist consultancy solutions to the international energy industries. Although headquartered in Aberdeen, it also has operational training facilities in Montrose, Dundee, Baku, Azerbaijan, Trinidad and Louisiana. The company employs about 200 people in the UK and internationally.

## Why?

The draw of a vibrant international industry, with its good job prospects and the chance of international travel, took me into the oil sector in the 1980s. Then, while managing a re-engineering project for Salmis in the early 1990s, I discovered a passion for helping people develop their overall capabilities, as well as their understanding of the risks of the environment within which they operate.

## What was your first senior job?

Contracts/operations manager and then deputy general manager for a small Aberdeen-based specialist contractor, the Alpha Group, in 1987.

## Do you work for love or money?

Both. My partner might say that many people work to live, but I live to work. While I recognise this trait, having lost my wife to cancer a number of years ago, I

also recognise the need for a better work-life balance.

## Was your first job for pocket money pennies or the first rung on the career ladder?

My first real job was as a trainee quantity surveyor. This was undoubtedly my first rung on the ladder to a management position.

## Was yours a seamless, logical progression or did fate lend a hand?

On obtaining my degree, I was offered a position with RB Farquhar within their offshore construction division. Fate then lent a hand – the division was closed on completion of a project, but I joined another firm, WT Partnership, and was fortunate enough to be seconded to Norway. Whilst there I met the director of Alpha Group, and returned to Aberdeen to join them.

## What has been the single most important stage of your career?

Leading the management buyout of RGIT Montrose.

## Which stage has been most challenging and why?

Outwith the MBO, my period as a general manager with Liberty Occupational Health, in 1998, was the most challenging. I realised I had inherited an organisation that was not commercially focused and was losing money. But since I liked what the company stood for, I decided to stay. Long hours and many operational and financial challenges later, we had re-engineered the company.



Murray Strachan, who thinks e-mails should not be used as a substitute for 'real communication'

Picture: Nathaniel Benefield

## What has been the essential element that has got you where you are today?

There is no single element. I believe that it is a combination of vision, focus, commercial awareness, team work and a determination to make a difference.

## Any life-changing magic moments along the way?

Firstly, getting married and the birth of my children, and then subsequently meeting my current partner, Carol. Equally, leading the buyout of RGIT Montrose has been a very positive learning experience and significantly life changing.

## Any regrets?

None from a business perspective – I think it's a wasted emotion.

## What do you like least about your job?

The amount of e-mails I receive daily, and the way some people use them as a substitute for real communication.

## Minimum 12-hour day or out the door by five?

Minimum 12-hour day!

## Early bird or night owl?

Both.

## Best under pressure or well chilled?

Both, depending on the circumstance or subject matter.

## Creative or logical?

I have a more logical approach most of the time. However, that doesn't mean I'm not creative.

## Team player or lone wolf?

Definitely a team player.

## Desk/office essentials:

P900 docking station; several paintings by my partner Carol; pictures of the family; midi stereo system; and some valued desk gifts.

## Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

In a senior executive board role for a large private company or plc with a couple of independent director positions.

## You've won the Lotto: what do you do?

Accelerate my plans towards balancing my time between networking on the golf course and working with a number of companies independently.

## Your dream job?

Chief executive with the Professional Golf Association.

## Recipe for winding down?

Spending quality time with family and friends, or golf.

● This column is inspired by and dedicated to the late actor John Barron, who played CJ, the boss with the infamous catchphrase, in the 1970s BBC comedy series, *The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin*.