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Posted on Thursday 25th July 2013

Chairman, Mackwell Electronics Ltd
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> Having a PhD is just the start – you must decide what you want to do with it

I have largely worked in the commercial areas of the process control industry. I started my career as a Product Manager at a company manufacturing specific ion electrodes, followed by a period as Sales and Marketing Manager of a Philips subsidiary manufacturing temperature control equipment. After Philips I was appointed as the Sales and Marketing Director of an American company, Rochester Instruments, that manufactured process control equipment in Scotland.

Since 1995 I have been the Managing Director of Mackwell Electronics, a company that designs and manufactures emergency lighting in Aldridge. In December 2011 a new MD was appointed and I am now the Chairman of the Company, providing guidance and support to the new management team. I am still very much involved in the day to day operation of a substantial Company that employs 150 people, and sells over £1M of product each month, throughout the world. I enjoy seeing the Company and products develop, and assisting people to obtain new skills and experience.

During my time as MD of Mackwell, I worked hard to develop the products and business internationally – 70% of Mackwell's sales now come from outside the UK. I established Mackwell within the professional body representing the lighting industry, the Lighting Industry Federation, and was President of the LIF from 2003 to 2005.

In addition, in 2008 I arranged for Mackwell to obtain accreditation to the environmental standard ISO 14001, to ensure that operating Mackwell had the minimum effect on the environment. In 2010 Mackwell became a Carbon Zero company, by arranging to plant trees to offset the carbon dioxide necessarily produced by its operation.

My PhD from Birmingham really helped my career. Working in the commercial areas of technical businesses it has helped me obtain senior positions and establish my credibility with my technical colleagues. Also the detailed analysis that is required to complete a PhD and the breadth of understanding that you acquire has been useful in developing the businesses with which I have been involved.

Having a PhD is just the start – you must decide what you want to do with it. If you want to work in the commercial world, you must learn to work and relate with other people of all skill levels. Your academic training will give you the ability to analyse, and understand a very wide range of complex commercial issues, but you need to find an environment where this will be valued.

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