

A COFFEE WITH ...

People are my inspiration - anybody continually striving to improve

TOM Cullen is the chairman and group managing director of the Wirral-based Digital Group of companies, which deliver business telecommunications solutions and network services.

Tom launched Digital Europe Ltd in October 1992 after spending more than 20 years working in North America for companies including ITT Corp and IBM.

He lives in Neston, south Wirral, with his wife Ann. They have three children.

In his spare time Tom enjoys spending time horse riding with his granddaughter Grace, who competes in dressage, supporting Everton FC with his grandsons and watching them play football.



WHAT is your proudest achievement in business?

I have been lucky enough to have many proud moments in business but there are two that stand out. Managing ITT's direct telecommunications operations across Canada was one, but probably my proudest achievement is establishing a profitable group of telecommunications companies in the UK, which will celebrate 25 years in business next year.

DO you dress up or down for business?

I suppose I dress up because I wear a suit every day, although if I am in the office my one concession to being casual is I lose the tie.

WHAT is a tip that is invaluable in life or business?

I have two tips, both from Vince Lombardi, the famous coach of the Green Bay Packers who took them to five NFL championships and the first two Superbowls: "Fatigue makes cowards of us all - stay fit." "Perfection is not attainable. But if we

chase perfection, we can catch excellence."

DO you have a motto that guides the way you do business?

Turnover is vanity, profit is sanity, and get things right the first time.

Who has inspired you in your business life and why?

Harold S Geneen, chairman and CEO of International Telephone and Telegraph Corp (ITT). He took ITT from a medium-size business in 1961 with a turnover of 765 million dollars into an international conglomerate with a turnover of 17 billion dollars in 1970. He was born in Bournemouth, England.

WHAT do you always carry with you?

My smart phone and a lot of experience.

WHAT is your firm's biggest asset?

My staff and my customers.

WHAT would you be doing if you hadn't followed your current career path?

I don't know what I would have done. I always wanted to be in business and own my own company. I like the challenge and strategic thinking.

HOW do you make contacts that are useful for business?

I attend business conferences, both national and international, and we are also members of business organisations like Wirral Chamber of Commerce.

WHAT is your favourite film?

Bridge over the River Kwai and 12 Years a Slave.

WHAT is the most inspirational book you have ever read?

I am not inspired by books. It is people that inspire me, like Terry Fox, a Canadian athlete, humanitarian, and cancer research activist. In 1980, with one leg having been amputated, he embarked on a cross-Canada run to raise money and awareness for cancer. Although the spread of his cancer eventually forced him to end his

quest after 143 days and 5,373 kilometers (3,339 mi), and ultimately cost him his life, his efforts resulted in a lasting, worldwide legacy. The annual Terry Fox Run, first held in 1981, has grown to involve millions of participants in more than 60 countries and is now the world's largest one-day fundraiser for cancer research. More than 650 million Canadian dollars has been raised in his name.

WHEN are you most creative or inspired?

When I am in the company of successful, motivated and innovative people. That does not necessarily mean wealthy or famous people. It could be anybody who is continually striving to improve their skills and performance.

WHEN do you take your coffee break?

I don't take an actual coffee break, I usually grab one in between meetings

AMERICANO, latte, cappuccino - what's your coffee break favourite?

Flat white.