



James (Jim) M. Sharpe

HBS Rock Center 310
617-496-6285; jsharp@hbs.edu

Biography

Jim Sharpe sold Extrusion Technology, an aluminum extrusion fabricator, in December 2008 to RFE Investment Partners, a private equity firm. His interests are in the area of search funds, manufacturing, niche marketing, pricing, basic technology, leadership, family balance, large/small company differences, ethics, exit strategies and employee empowerment.

The company, purchased in 1987, after an 11 month search, grew from \$4MM to \$32MM developing a value added products niche in the Datacomm/Telecom electronics markets and a supplemental factory in Xiamen, China to support their 50% export sales. Early stages of this process are the subject of a First Year case in TEM.

After taking on substantial debt, Jim transformed a second generation, family owned business, with minimal information from the seller. A focus on quality led to early qualification for ISO-9000 in 1992 and emphasis on lead time reduction and lean manufacturing techniques resulted in a Bronze Shingo award in 2008. After a first failed attempt to sell the business in 2000, Jim recruited a CEO and developed a management team that allowed for a successful exit strategy 8 years later.

Family focus was a high priority for Jim who hired his wife, Debby Stein Sharpe MBA81, as CFO in 1988, contrary to advice from his Advisory Board. After their two sons were born, he made time to walk the kids to school, make lunches and be available for school activities, soccer and juggling. Debby and Jim adopted their daughter at age 5 while the boys were in elementary school.

Jim has a BSBA degree from Babson College and after graduating from HBS in 1976, joined the staff of Group Executive Jack Welch at GE and moved on to Product Manager positions within the GE materials businesses where he met Debby. After 5 years, he left GE to run 3 turn-around situations which prepared him to strike off on his own in 1986.

Biking, juggling, public speaking, mentoring, various board positions, website development, philanthropic activities, investments and involvement in YPO/WPO keep Jim active.