

April 13, 2012

Will Spates: Articulation advice came via biologist

WHO AM I?

NAME: [Will Spates](#)

TITLE AND COMPANY: President, Indoor Environmental Technologies Inc.

YEARS WITH THE COMPANY: 19

YEARS IN TAMPA BAY: 30

NATURE OF BUSINESS: Creating healthy buildings through applied science. We're building doctors.

EDUCATION: Graduate and undergraduate coursework **University of South Florida** and **St. Petersburg College**

WHERE YOU GREW UP AND WHAT IT WAS LIKE: I grew up in Wilmette, Ill., just north of Chicago. Cold and snowy winters, warm summers on Lake Michigan. Wonderful memories.

Tips of the trade

What do you get paid to do? Diagnose and improve the health of buildings to support the people who work and live in them

How do you manage the information flow? Computers, capable staff, office meetings, being accessible

How do you generate new ideas? Foreseeing opportunities in marketing and production. Staff meeting brainstorming.

What was your best business idea and what was the outcome? My best business idea was to train myself and later our inspection staff in the art of microscopy and identification of mold species and particulates associated with water-damaged buildings. We have our own in-house lab and are all well versed in microscopy, which enables us to give our clients preliminary results within hours of returning to our office. This sets us apart from the competition.

How do you organize your "things to do" list? Business coaching has taught me to manage time, set goals, measure results and adjust on a regular basis. Reading the classics — [Napoleon Hill](#), [Stephen Covey](#), etc.

Who is your mentor and why? Biologist [Wolfgang Maes](#) taught me to always keep learning to keep it simple, to articulate our findings in plain language, and to respect the moral obligation of sharing what we know for the betterment of all through teaching, writing and right action.

Background check

What was your first paid job? Busboy and caddy at Indian Hill Country Club in Winnetka, Ill., 1966.

How did you get started in your current career? Bought a house that made me sick. I figured out it was the moldy carpeting and HVAC system. I was still in my previous career as a yacht captain. After meeting [Helmut Ziehe](#) in Clearwater, he introduced me to Bau-biologie (building biology) and [Wolfgang Maes](#). Took a course while I was still sailing and never looked back.



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If you could have dinner with one person you've never met, who would it be and why? [Warren Buffett](#).

I like the way he lives his life and his sense of family. It would be intensely interesting having a candid conversation with him.

If you weren't in your current career, what would you be doing? I would be sailing in tropical waters in the winter and exploring the cooler climates in summer. In my next life I would like to come back in academia after being inspired at an early age on what would grow through the rest of my life.

What is your favorite activity with your family? Sailing and home projects

What's a fact about you that few people know? I have knocked on death's door four times in my life and have never felt fear. This life is just a test for what is still to come.

Who are your heroes in the business world and why? [Warren Buffett](#) for his insights, success and lifestyle,

[Steve Jobs](#) for his creativity and innovation in business,

[Steven Covey](#) for lighting a path toward successful business.

What trait of yours makes you the most successful? Envisioning my future and keeping my thoughts above the line

In one word, how would people describe you? Good

What music do you have in your car right now? PBS classical

Words to the wise

What advice would you give to someone starting out in your field? There is no substitute for experience. Take it a step at a time, and work with someone knowledgeable who is willing to teach you their ways and that you enjoy working with. Never stop learning, which isn't hard in this business.

How could Tampa Bay change to be more business friendly? Better public transportation