



My name's Dani Saveker and my story began in 1994 when I first joined Savekers on a temporary basis to carry out a design project as a new graduate from Teesside University. My story there ended on 10th March 2009 when I signed the paperwork placing the company into voluntary administration.

The interesting bits have been those in between, the lessons learnt and equally what now follows.

I spent 14 years working within Savekers, my family's 106 year old business - we manufactured architectural metalwork and shop fittings, products for the construction and leisure industries as well as the public sector.

During this time I started on a temporary contract; designed a retractable barrier (the strap barriers found at check outs in clothes shops, in banks and airports); ran the shopfloor with 100 employees; restructured it making significant savings; learnt to electroplate, weld and fabricate, was appointed production director; became Managing Director; restricted the Board and made my uncle redundant; carried out an MBO valued at £2.4m; managed a recover following a major chemical fire; celebrated the company's centennial; bought two businesses; related businesses and eventually had to put the company into administration.

During my time with Savekers, I grew up and discovered a little bit about life. My lessons have been personal and professional; I have had three children, a failed marriage, found my soul mate, given and received counselling, lost close family and overcome prejudices'. As a business owner I've experienced fires and devastation, employing my ex-

husband, redundancies, tremendous times and happiness, heartache and struggles and finally relief... and not one bit would I change.

Recession - the human fallout and the opportunities

We're all guilty of reading and seeing headlines with famous company names facing administration and thinking 'oh, another one...' and that's it. Unless you've gone through it you can't begin to have a clue what it's all about. I didn't.

Insolvency practitioners know their job inside out but they aren't great at communicating this to anyone else.

Once we'd agreed the course of action, things started to slip out of our control. Our bank was told a day before we'd agreed and immediately our account was closed. We weren't quite ready but that didn't matter. Out of the blue I was ordered to go to an appointed solicitor in the city centre - I had no idea what for or what would happen. I went alone and signed the documents applying for an administration order.

It was brief and cold, I literally paid £5 and signed, repeated some words and that was that. After shedding a few tears I went back and prepared a list of who would stay and who would go. It was based on a current order book and we could only keep people directly involved. Again, it's cold and harsh. We didn't know when it would all happen until the day itself. I had to return to sign another document at the solicitors and on getting back to the office I was told that within the hour we would announce things to our workforce.

The only thing I could remember was insisting I did the announcement - it was my responsibility and with a lump in my throat we went down the stairs to the shop floor.

There I stood in front of the workforce, small and lonely. You could see they knew from the look on their faces. Where would I start? What do you say to people who have worked for a company for 40 years?

"Ladies and gentlemen, I stand here with sadness in my heart as I have to tell you that despite every effort and hope, we have no choice but to enter administration." I remember my words clearly and with them the first of my tears fell down my cheek. All I could think was that I had a job to do and I must do the best I could and so I fought on and introduced the insolvency practitioner. I continued to stand frozen to the spot, looking at my colleagues but noise seemed muffled and in a distance. I felt as if I was floating over and not really there. The next thing was the list of who stayed and who was to go was read out. Even though names were being read out, people were mouthing "are you ok" to me. This wasn't what I expected.

I personally feel that the company killed itself. The heritage was the downfall in so many ways. Everything has a life and companies are not the exception. Savekers had been ill for years - from the recession of the 1990s possibly and despite finding cures for some of its ailments, ultimately life ends.

There's nothing I would have done differently - everything that happened did so with reason at the time. I would still acquire businesses and it would still be essential to take people out of the business. Perhaps a better question would be this...

"Given a blank piece of paper and the knowledge and experience you've gained, what would you do...?"

I now have a blank piece of paper - I started Jeeves Services (UK) Ltd. Jeeves provides lifestyle management and support to businesses, families and professionals and I adore what I do. Born out of recession are many opportunities and I am seizing mine.

For more information you can visit <http://www.danisaveker.com> or <http://www.jeevesservices.com>

As part of a series of business features, next month we will be looking employability issues.