

A bold entrepreneur wins award of year

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by **Jeremy Cresswell**

ONE of Aberdeen's boldest entrepreneurs, Ramco Energy founder Steve Remp, has won the 1996 Grampian Industrialist of the Year Award.

Since Ramco came into being in 1977 as a small oilfield service firm, Steve Remp has fought relentlessly to build the business into what is now regarded as one of Britain's fastest growing and successful companies.

A string of awards have been collected along the way and, last night, he became the 19th North-east businessman to bag the Grampian accolade, having cut short a business trip to the US to receive it.

Mr Remp admitted to the Press and Journal that none of this would have been possible without building a solid team around him and keeping all in the picture every step along the way.

He said good internal communications were crucial to the success of any firm. But, all too often in business, managers failed abysmally on this front.

"Whether it's people answering the phone or senior managers, you have to devote time to communicating with them all,

to be open and to be on the same wavelength," said Mr Remp.

"Sadly, that doesn't happen. Yet it is so fundamental to success. Internal communications are key, so too is integrity.

"Reputations can take years to build, but they can be destroyed in minutes."

Mr Remp said other essential qualities for success in business included clarity of vision, patience and the ability to take knocks, then get up off the floor and get back on with the task.

Forays

He added that many of the countless thousands of Scots who fanned out around the world 100 years or so ago had these qualities. That was why they were so successful.

Ramco's founder said that spirit still resided in Grampian.

Even though American-born Mr Remp's family is steeped in the oil industries of Texas and Oklahoma, the first forays in Aberdeen following his arrival in 1971 included contract aviation and restaurant ownership.

Delta Hotels was established and later, he financed and supervised construction of the Sheraton Inn to serve the international oil community.

Two years later, in 1977, the Sheraton stake was sold and oil service venture Ramco opened for business, specialising in cleaning and protecting oilfield tubulars and pipeline sections.

Growth was rapid and, in 1985, Mr Remp picked up a major award in recognition of his business prowess.

But, 12 months later, all hell broke loose in the North Sea when the international oil price crashed through the basement.

Ramco was nearly taken out after major customer John Howard Group crashed into receivership. Saddled with an £800,000 bad debt, the firm clawed its way back up the cliff and, without outside help, cleared the albatross by 1989.

In 1986, Mr Remp became interested in the possibility of breaking into the Soviet Union and was among the first into Siberia.

Three years later, he was in Baku, Azerbaijan - possibly the first Western oilman into the birthplace of the modern oil industry in 70 years.

Today, Ramco is both an oil company and an energy services group.



■ Grampian Industrialist of the Year Steve Remp (front) shows off the trophy. Mr Remp is seen with Junior Chamber Aberdeen president Graham MacEwan (left) and junior chamber project manager David Oglvie. Picture: Sandy McCook.