**A brown building with many windows

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**From Global Experience to Leading a Legacy: Drew Allen’s Entrepreneurial Journey**

For many entrepreneurs, the path to leadership is filled with unexpected turns, valuable learning experiences, and the courage to embrace change. Drew Allen’s journey—from international business in Hong Kong to leading his family’s company, Grace Technologies—illustrates the power of global perspective, adaptability, and strategic growth.

**A Global Start in Business**

Born and raised in the Quad Cities, Drew’s entrepreneurial mindset was influenced by his father’s drive to build a successful business. However, his journey began far from home. With a degree in international business and marketing, along with a Chinese minor, Drew pursued opportunities that took him across the world. After extensive study-abroad experiences in Asia, he landed a role with 3M in Hong Kong, working on expanding an automotive aftermarket brand in the booming Chinese market.

During his time abroad, Drew traveled to China over 150 times in three years, gaining firsthand experience in distribution, retail sales, and international business strategy. He fell in love with Hong Kong’s dynamic energy, but when his family’s business began expanding and his mother’s health issues arose, he knew it was time to return home.

**Stepping into the Family Business**

Grace Technologies, founded by Drew’s father, Phil Allen, began as a system integration business before evolving into a manufacturer of industrial safety and predictive maintenance products. The company works with major clients like Boeing, Procter & Gamble, and ExxonMobil, ensuring industrial maintenance is safer, smarter, and more efficient.

When Drew returned, he took over Grace’s international division and key accounts, leveraging his global experience to expand the company’s reach. Over time, he grew into leadership roles and, in January 2021, officially became CEO.

**Overcoming Challenges and Driving Growth**

Taking over as CEO during a global pandemic presented unique challenges, from supply chain disruptions to shifting market demands. However, Drew led Grace Technologies through record-breaking growth, emphasizing innovation and adaptability.

One of the company’s key expansions has been in Industrial Internet of Things (IIOT)—a market projected at $2 billion. By developing wireless battery-powered sensors that monitor vibrations and temperature in machinery, Grace helps prevent costly downtime for industrial facilities. The move into IIOT is a game-changer, positioning Grace Technologies as a leader in predictive maintenance solutions.

**The Importance of Family Business Strategy**

Transitioning leadership in a family business can be complex, and Drew acknowledges that the early years of working with his father weren’t always smooth. Heated dinner table discussions were common, and at times, both questioned if the arrangement would work.

To ensure a healthy transition, Drew and his father engaged with the Loyola Family Business Center, where they developed a structured approach to managing family-business dynamics. They also established a formal fiduciary board to provide oversight and strategic guidance—something Drew insisted on before officially stepping into the CEO role.

**Lessons for Entrepreneurs**

Drew’s journey offers valuable insights for aspiring business owners and leaders:

1. **Embrace Global Experiences** – Working abroad broadened his perspective, shaping his leadership approach and business strategy.
2. **Adaptability is Essential** – Whether expanding into new markets or navigating crises like COVID-19, the ability to pivot is crucial.
3. **Leverage Technology for Growth** – Investing in IIOT and digital transformation has given Grace Technologies a competitive edge.
4. **Family Business Success Requires Structure** – Creating a formal board and defining clear roles helped ease leadership transitions.
5. **Test Before You Invest** – One of Drew’s biggest lessons in product development is to experiment before committing significant resources.

**Looking Ahead**

Under Drew’s leadership, Grace Technologies continues to expand its impact, not just in industrial safety but in cutting-edge predictive maintenance solutions. By balancing innovation, global experience, and a strong family business foundation, Drew is guiding the company toward a future of continued success.

For entrepreneurs, his story is a reminder that the best leaders aren’t just born into business—they adapt, learn, and take bold steps forward.