

Interview with Mr. Adrian Walchli

I met with my interview subject, Adrian Wachli, at his home. I've selected to interview him because I was particularly interested in his company, and because it was simple to set up a meeting through my girlfriend. I met him about a year ago, and throughout the time I've spent around him I was able to observe some things before I even knew he was the president of a small company. He seemed to be working around the clock, mainly online. I also noticed his father's presence in the business when the two of them were together. And as I found out later, Mr. Walchli is the part-owner and president of Marinsa International, a family owned business that was started about 40 years ago right inside of his father's garage. From his first position as a salesman to his current status, Adrian Walchli has worked up the career ladder despite being the owner's son.

Marinsa specializes in the sale and service of commercial diesel engines used in power generation and marine propulsion. And although this seems like a niche and perhaps even odd industry, it certainly has a huge and competitive market, which the Walchli family was able to spot and jump in on. Although Marinsa is based in and operates out of Miami, Mr. Walchli specified that "99.9 percent of our business is international, not in the US". He explained that Marinsa is a business working throughout the whole Latin World - offices opened in Panama, Peru, Ecuador and Spain, totalling 35 employees worldwide. Some of these employees are salesmen, and office managers, while others are constantly traveling in order to service engines worldwide. Mr. Walchli mentioned that their servicemen travel everywhere one can imagine, including Fiji, Senegal, American Samoa and Micronesia. The company works with and represents a larger manufacturing company named Wabtec. Marinsa International is Wabtec's largest marine distributor worldwide. *One of Marinsa's service vehicles is pictured on the right.*



To steer away from the company itself, I want to talk more about Mr. Walchli and the way he runs business. He told me that most of his beliefs and work policies have been passed on from his parents, the founders of the company, and lies at the heart of Marinsa's success. I find his approach to work fascinating, because he always puts the employee and their relationships within the organization first. This reminds me a lot of the HP Way, which was part of my business biography for Hewlett & Packard. Similarly to the two pathfinders, Mr. Walchli prioritizes the happiness and trust between him, his

employees, and even his manufacturers. According to him, a strong relationship with manufacturers always results in faster shipping, better prices and overall a much smoother manufacturing process. Mr. Walchli notes that these relationships are the main advantage of having a small business, and oftentimes can even propel Marinsa in



front of competitors. As he explained, larger and more hungry companies often disregard the necessity of forming individual relationships, which costs them long-term customers. *Marinsa's service crew onboard one of their vessels is pictured on the left.*

When it comes to corporate and business ethics, Mr. Walchli credits his father as his greatest inspiration. And it was precisely his father who taught him the importance of “keeping your word” in business. He mentions he’s been “burned” many times, even by respectable men in large companies. And although he grew up with his father’s notion of conducting fair business established entirely on trust, Mr. Walchli learned that putting a deal in writing is an unfortunate necessity, especially in the United States.

Comparisons between the US and Latin America were a rather common theme in this interview. From what I gathered, business in Latin America is a lot more personal and relaxed. In the US, competitive markets are sometimes paired with selfish individuals to create a more volatile working environment. And it is also this global outreach of Marinsa that created difficulties for the company. As Mr. Walchli states, constantly dealing with various currencies, international manufacturers, offices in many parts of the world and even the hiring/firing process for the employees is a huge challenge to overcome. *Marinsa Office building displayed on the right.*



Another crucial part of running a business is balancing it with your personal life. From my own observations of the Walchli family, even though both parents are often working, they are usually flexible and always spend time with family. To my question about this balance, Mr. Walchli answered that the key part of being able to relax is

splitting the work up among a group of managers you trust. As of right now, the president has such a group of people that relieve the amount of stress put on him during everyday life. In the beginning of his career, however, Mr. Walchli was often interrupted at the most inconvenient time. As he said, “Things only break on weekends and on nights, it seems”. This quote really impressed me, because it shows that even a person in such a high position may constantly be bothered by business emergencies, and has to always be prepared to crisis-manage.

To close off, I talked to Mr. Walchli about his advice to the youth and someone looking to pursue a business career. He made an extremely wise and very relevant point, stating that the beginning of every career is interest in it. Mr. Walchli said that his own career began due to curiosity, and the constant desire to grow and learn more. He found it frustrating at first, saying that it was very hard for a young person to join an already-established industry and establish his ideas and beliefs. He struggled to convince the older and more experienced workers that what he brought to the company had merit. But through determination and curiosity, Mr. Walchli was ultimately able to climb to the top and establish himself as the leader of Marinsa. We closed our interview with a discussion about success. In his opinion, success is simply “the freedom to do what you want to do”. And while Mr. Walchli himself believes that he hasn’t reached that point, he certainly thinks that his parents have, and appreciates their support in helping him reach it as well. I applaud his determination and appreciate that he was able to have this interview with it. I hope to become as well-versed in the language of true business, and that I can keep in touch with Adrian Walchli, the president and co-owner of Marinsa International.

Question Bank

- Summarize your career so far in a few sentences.
 - To help me grasp the scale of your company, could you give me an estimate for how many employees you have? In how many countries do you operate in?
- Why did you pursue this career? Was it intentional or did something happen along the way to guide you?
- What was your first job ever? AND What was your first job out of school?
- Did you go to college, and if so, where and what did you study? Would you study the same thing again?
- What jobs or other experiences have been the most helpful in getting you ready to be successful in your current role?
- What technical skills do you find are the most useful to you in your current job?
- What interpersonal skills do you rely upon the most?
- (Right, so I know that your business is in a very active and competitive industry) How do you deal with such competition?
- Working in such a vast and global company, what would you say is the most complex and frustrating part of your job?
- How has the pandemic affected your business positively and or negatively?

- What advice do you have for someone looking to have a career such as yours?
- What was one of your toughest moments in business?
- Who do you look up to in business and in life?
- I understand that such a high position requires around-the-clock work. How do you balance work and personal life? What advice would you give to someone who is struggling to find the right balance?
- Where do you see yourself and, more importantly, Marinsa, in 10 years?
- Define “success” for you personally.
- What haven’t I asked that you really want to share?

Background Research

Primarily from being personally acquainted with the subject before the interview, but also these few sources:

- [Linkedin](#)
- [Marinsa International - Website](#)