32 PAGES OF BUSINESS INSPIRATION

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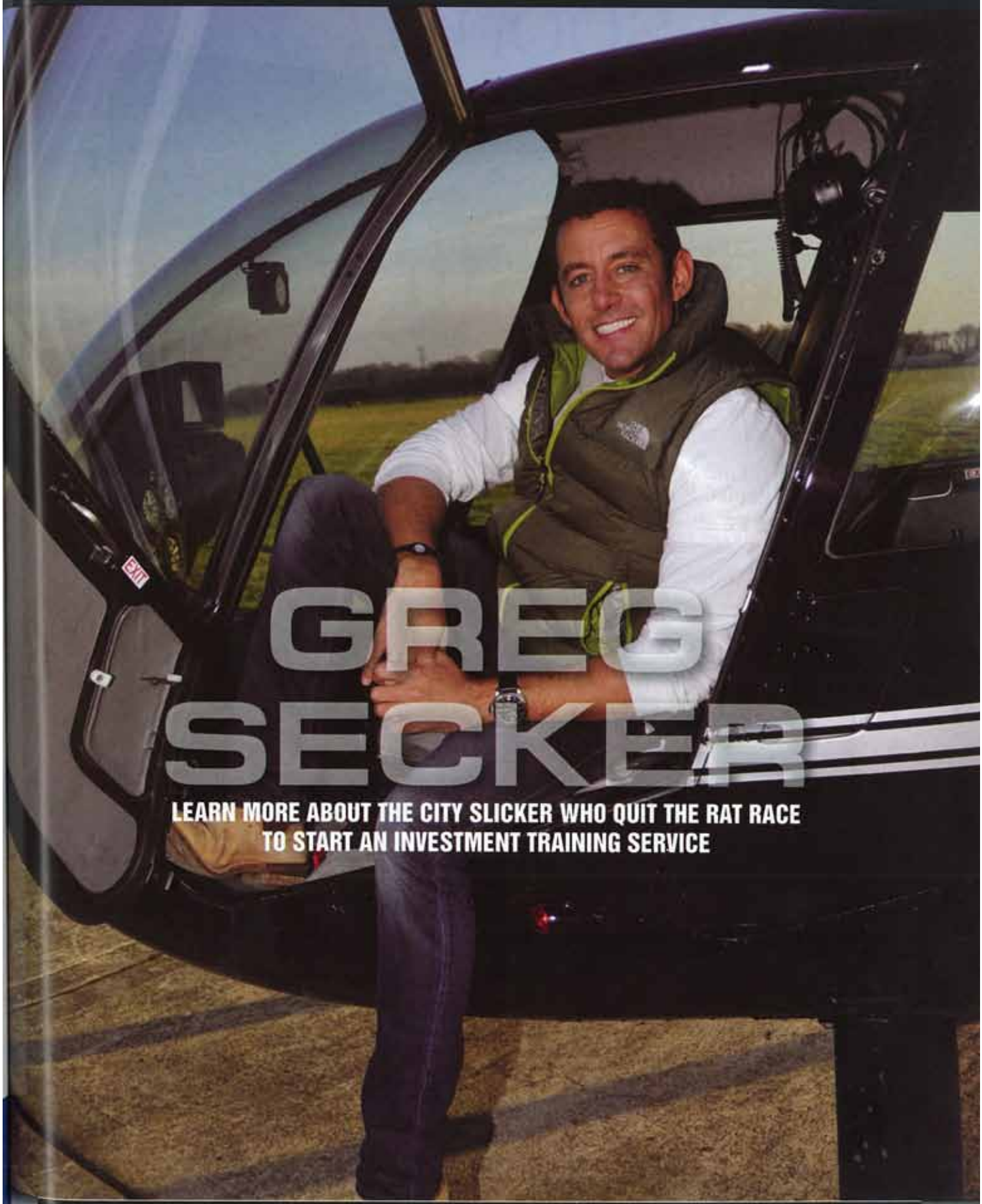

GREG SECKER

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CITY SLICKER WHO QUIT THE RAT RACE TO START AN INVESTMENT TRAINING SERVICE

CHECK OUT THE BUSINESS POWER LIST ON PAGE 58

GREG SECKER ON HIS INVESTMENT TRAINING VENTURE 'KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION'

MARKET KNOWLEDGE

You used to work as a trader – how did you get started in that profession?
I originally started my career as a trading technologist at Thomas Cook Financial Services, which is where I first really learnt about trading. My role was to create systems which identified opportunities to make profit on the foreign exchange market. I also headed the team responsible for developing one of the first real-time ForEx trading platforms, the Virtual Trading Desk.

You were VP at Mellon Financial Corporation at a very young age; how did you progress so quickly in your career?
I was fortunate enough to work alongside some of the greatest traders of the time, visiting trading floors across the world. On top of this, I had a real passion for what I was doing and I worked hard. I also had my fair share of good timing and luck, online trading was in its infancy and it was serendipity that I was in the right place at the right time.

What made you decide to retire from Mellon Financial Corporation at only 27 years old?
As well as working for Mellon Financial Corporation, I was also putting what I was learning into practise on my personal trading account. By 27, I found myself in the great position of being able to choose whether or not to remain at work. I decided that I would leave, but continue to trade from home, teaching my friends and family the trading strategies that had been successful for me.

Why did you decide to found your own company? What gave you the idea?
I didn't know when I left Mellon Financial Corporation that I was going to establish Knowledge to Action. It all just fell into place rather quickly! As I said, after I left I began to trade from my living room floor, and gradually, more and more of my friends and family joined me. I had a mini trading floor in the comfort of my own home, which was great, but it also got a bit manic – I had friends camping out so that they could hit the markets as soon as they opened at 5 am!

Whilst I enjoyed those three months of trading at home, it was obvious that it couldn't continue that way. I found that I loved teaching people about the markets, and that they were surprised at how easy trading could be. I decided that I wanted to show people that anybody can make a good trader, and so Knowledge to Action was born.

What does Knowledge to Action do?
Knowledge to Action is a leading trader coaching company which provides people with a good working knowledge of the various markets, enabling them to trade successfully on their own.

We offer a variety of different courses, covering the foreign exchange, stocks and futures markets, and provide quality instruction to a range of ability levels.

We offer our students insider tips and insights, teaching them the signs and patterns which signal when is best to either enter or leave a trade, and also explain how to minimise risk so that no more than 1% of their account is ever lost on any given trade. After they've completed a course, traders also get the chance to put what they've learnt into practice on a live trading floor, complete with their own professional trader offering one on one advice.

Do you get nervous when delivering seminars?
Not really, I love it. Having said that, the majority of events I speak at are huge these days. Talking alongside the likes of Sir Richard Branson and Donald Trump, when you are speaking to those size audiences (circa. 8,000 people) the faces all merge into a sea of heads. Crowds of just 50 people are tougher, as you try to answer everyone's questions and that's where I tend to overrun.

Any tips for successful public speaking?
The key to delivering a successful public seminar or speech is to be confident and be yourself. If you have confidence in what you are saying, and you're truly passionate about it, the audience will pick up on it and you'll be able to keep them engaged. Likewise, however, if you come across as nervous and self-conscious, the audience will pick up on how uncomfortable you are, and begin to feel anxious themselves. Just make sure you're happy with what you're going to say and practise it until you could do it in your sleep! Keep authentic and don't be afraid to laugh at yourself.

What are the key skills that you need to be a successful trader?
Whilst anyone who puts their mind to it can learn how to be a successful trader, it's true that certain personality types take to it more naturally than others. The ideal character type is someone who can listen to and practically apply any advice that they've been given, but also use their own initiative to take control of situations. Perhaps most importantly, however, they have to be able to stay calm under pressure and stop themselves from rushing into decisions. In all aspects of trading, discipline is key.

Do you think the stereotypes about people working in the financial sector are unfair?
Yes. There's been a whole spate of books published recently that glamorise the cut and thrust, adrenaline fuelled and allegedly drug-taking nature of traders. Contrary to popular belief, this is just not the case. Most traders are steady, focused, disciplined people – that's why they do what they do.

You set up the Knowledge to Action Foundation, an organisation that helps disadvantaged children around the world. Tell us some more about this:
I started the Knowledge to Action Foundation with my girlfriend Katherine in 2010. It's a not-for-profit organisation which aims to improve the quality of life for children around the world by actively supporting causes such as Barnardo's and The Ubuntu Education Fund – a charity which provides health and educational resources to over 40,000 orphans and vulnerable children in South Africa. Katherine has been involved with Ubuntu for some time and is actually the head of the advisory board for Ubuntu in London, so it's an organisation which we both feel strongly about. Over the course of the year, the Knowledge to Action Foundation holds various events in order to raise money for these and other causes. The most recent of these was The Flying Trader, which saw me taking to the skies over the City in a helicopter and trading the foreign exchange markets live, donating all the brokerage profits to charity.

We also look to promote education, life skills and youth leadership initiatives. In October we are holding our first Youth Leadership Summit – a five day event for 14-17 year olds which will focus on key personal development techniques, helping them to work towards a successful future.

When you were trading from a helicopter over London to raise money for the fund, did you have any nerves?
I did actually. Despite having traded many times live in front of people, when the whole world is watching and you're in a helicopter, there's a lot to think about. So far we've made nice profits every time, so fortunately we're good.

How do you unwind after a stressful day?
Spend time with my son, cook dinner with my partner, watch Dragons' Den or go out to dinner with friends.

Where do you see yourself in ten years?
I'll be running around the planet motivating people to not be afraid of making money or living true to themselves. I imagine doing more work with my partner with the foundation and playing like a big kid with toys.

My Day...

0600 - Get up and check the markets first thing - placing trades if they look good
0700 - Call my trading floor in Sydney to get an update and make sure everything is running smoothly over there
0730 - Hold a meeting with Knowledge to Action's team to go through their day's schedule, catch up on projects
0900 - Check trading positions, take profits - run positions
1200 - Catch up with the Knowledge to Action Foundation team to go through and plan any upcoming events
1400 - Lunch meetings
1430 - Head back down to the trading floor to give a talk to the new traders and see how they're getting on, American session open
1530 - Have a conference call to catch up with my team in America
1700 - Go through tomorrow's itinerary with the guys in the office to make sure everyone is happy
1800 - One last check of my emails and the markets before I head back out
1900 - Arrive at Canary Wharf for my Introduction to Forex seminar
2130 - Finish up and finally leave for home