

CompTIA®



# Spotlight on Success

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Mike Brooman



“Know where your strengths lie and find others you can work with that compliment you.”

## Building a Business That Stands Out

In this edition we have the pleasure of talking with Mike Brooman, CEO of Vanti and Birmingham young professional of the year. We discuss the humble beginnings of Vanti to the journey to industry leader that the company has become today. We discuss the milestones to success and the importance of creating the right cultures and values to deliver a client centric focus.

**CompTIA:** Can you provide readers with a quick overview of your business?

**Mike:** The Vanti story is one of humble beginnings, our founder Raj worked in production for audio-visual events working at the Royal Albert Hall and doing the front of house sound for acts like Jimmy Page. He started working with a mobile DJ, cycling around where he grew up with wires and tools in his backpack, helping people move from mobile/hired PA systems to permanently installed ones. He always delivered the right support and never promised anything that couldn't be delivered.

After university and a number of successful projects in Birmingham, it seemed logical to establish Vanti (then known as RTS). Since then we have grown significantly through offering converged services that span the Audio Visual, IT and Telecoms. We're fortunate to have a loyal client base which includes the likes of BSH Home Appliances, the Library of Birmingham, Canary Wharf Group and United Business Media. We have throughout this time held onto the same principal of delivering what we say we will and this has set us in good stead for continued growth.

**CompTIA:** As a business you have had significant success – why do you think this is?

**Mike:** I think it is a combination of factors and we were lucky enough to have the right mix of all. You need the drive and determination to work through challenges, the right skills and talent to help deliver the projects and the right focus on service to make sure you build a happy and content client base.

**CompTIA:** Taking you back, what were the biggest challenges you faced in the early years?

**Mike:** Like many emerging businesses we found a number of challenges in the early years. These could be as simple as financing larger deals with suppliers through to managing the running costs of the business. We were really fortunate that our largest suppliers bought in to us early and extended us significant credit lines to help fuel our growth. We've always made a point of paying on time no matter what- staff first, then suppliers, then owners. For many companies the move into your own premises can be costly and bills and outgoings can easily spiral. We were very lucky in the sense that we moved the business in to a technology incubator space which meant we could fix costs that allowed us to effectively plan and budget for the business, removing the challenge and allowing us to focus on the core aspects of delivering the service and winning new business.

**CompTIA:** Have these challenges remained or have they changed?

**Mike:** Many of the challenges you face remain the same but the scales can change. Growing has been difficult, especially as we've needed to take on more talent. However, we've invested significant time in getting our culture and values right, which has made a huge difference as we're pushing on with our growth journey again. It is also really important to not only take a step back and look at what can be improved within the business but also to reflect on what's been achieved.

**CompTIA:** Were there any particular turning points that stand out for you?

**Mike:** I think a huge turning point for us was when we moved into our own bespoke office. This not only motivated the team but allowed us to change our operations. For example, we now have a unique space where we can build, configure and test equipment before deploying to our clients' premises ensuring we make operational savings whilst delivering the quality and service that we've become renowned for.

**CompTIA:** As an organisation you have been involved in some big flagship projects – can you tell us about one?

**Mike:** Our work for United Business Media has set us apart from the industry once again and resulted in us collecting an international and a domestic award this year at our largest trade show, Integrated Systems Europe.

We delivered on UBM's vision of a completely connected, Smart office that would support their transition to activity based working (you use the building and its spaces as a tool to get your work done, rather than simply being allocated a desk). Everyone in the building hot desks, up to and including the CEO and all of the services they interact with are driven from one smart card.

We not only enabled the building for productivity but because we could control all of the technology, saved significant amounts of energy too allowing them to achieve the highest energy efficiency rating of LEED Platinum.

**CompTIA:** Do you think as a business you did things differently to other's and if so what?

**Mike:** Tenacity, quality and service have all played a part in our growth. As mentioned earlier we don't make promises that cannot be delivered and clients recognise this and trust us. Every member of our team has a client focus and this combined with their talent has helped us to stand out in the markets we operate in.

**CompTIA:** As a business you have a very client centric focus – has this been easy to create and maintain in the business?

**Mike:** Anyone running a business knows that maintaining a consistently high quality of service requires work. We have worked hard to ensure that we listen and deliver our clients the service they need rather than trying to retrofit what we offer to their needs. Systems and process help you deliver work and these form part of a much larger way to engage the client. Our one company word is 'experience' and whilst we create some of the best technology experiences around, we're committed to extending this so that



**Congratulations on being recognised as Birmingham young professional of the year – what three business tips would you give others looking to replicate your success?**

- 1.** I think it's important to know where your strengths lie and find others you can work with that compliment you- that's true both at an employee/colleague level and also in partnership with other companies.
- 2.** Listen to clients- meet or ideally exceed their requirements and work with them to understand both what they need and what's possible.
- 3.** Never stop learning and be open with your expertise, work with integrity, be persistent and persevere.



clients really enjoy working with us. We genuinely want to delight them!

**CompTIA:** In terms of company culture – where do you think this begins, is it management or at recruitment level?

**Mike:** Leadership needs to take place from the top, as our behaviours set the tone and example for the rest of the team. However, building the culture starts at the talent acquisition level. It's all about getting the right attitude and personality fit for the organisation- something we hadn't fully appreciated before properly defining our culture and values. We're in a great place now we've got these embedded across the organisation.

