



OCEAN PIONEER

Bauer alumnus Trevor T. Davis (EMBA'13) worked in the commercial-diving and construction industries before starting his own company, Hydra Offshore Construction, in 2012. Within months of his graduation, the company had made millions.



Not Afraid to

D I V E

Right In

Executive MBA Alumnus
Trevor T. Davis'
Offshore Construction
Company Rides Fast
Wave of Success

Story by Wendell Brock
Photos by Chase Pedigo



In 2003,

Trevor T. Davis — a Providence, R.I., native who served four years in the U.S. Navy and about that many more in the Merchant Marines — came to Houston to attend commercial diving school. His first diving job, working as a dive tender on the oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, paid a measly \$8 an hour.

After hurricanes Rita and Katrina pummeled the region in 2005, Davis got married and traded his wetsuit for a desk. As a senior executive for a commercial-diving operation, he noticed he was surrounded by men who ran giant companies with nothing more than a diving-school education.

For Davis, that was a revelation. If he was to succeed in business, he felt he had to do better than that.

While continuing to work full time in the diving and construction industries, Davis earned his BBA from the University of Houston-Victoria;

enrolled in Bauer College's Executive MBA program; and started his own business — Hydra Offshore Construction (HOC) — in December 2012. By the time he finished his EMBA at Bauer, in May 2013, HOC had been awarded its first project.

"It actually mobilized the same night I graduated," Davis remembers. "So while my fellow classmates were graduating, I was offshore on my first project."

Now pay attention. This is where Davis' story starts to get really good.

From the money he made on that first project, he paid off his \$65,000 in student loans. And within three months of graduating from Bauer, his new company had generated millions. He closed 2013 with more than \$5 million in revenues and was able to keep about \$2.2 million in profits. Last year, the company made more than \$7 million, with similar profit margins. If

HOC continues to grow at its current annual rate of 40 percent, Davis says, it will be a \$100 million company in eight years.

That is his goal.

Not bad for a guy who started his company with \$10,000 in cash, \$20,000 in credit cards and a Ford F-150 pickup. Not bad for a guy who wasn't sure he could afford to bring his first vessel — a 210-foot-long ship that weighs nearly 300 tons and burns two gallons of diesel per minute — from California to its home base in the Gulf of Mexico, via the Panama Canal. Not bad for a guy who got thrown to the curb when he tried to borrow \$30,000 from a major bank, only to have that same institution finance a \$4.3 million boat a few months later.

Some things you should know about Trevor Davis:

He is a no-nonsense type with a dry, self-deprecating wit. He worries that talking about his

At left is the 210-foot M/V Ocean Pioneer, a multipurpose construction vessel that performs commercial diving, remotely operated vehicle (ROV) and salvage projects globally. Hydra Offshore was able to purchase this \$4.3 million vessel before their one-year anniversary.



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success might sound braggadocious. (It doesn't.) He believes Bauer gave him the confidence to become the ambitious, hard-driving businessman that he is today.

In fact, he was so sold on Bauer that it was the only place he applied for grad school. “When I first decided to go back to get my bachelor’s degree, at that point I had already made my five-year plan, and it included going to Bauer,” Davis says.

He liked the EMBA program’s cohort arrangement (in which students are placed on a single team for the entire run), its international residency and its fairly short, 18-month time commitment. (While at Bauer, Davis spent nearly two weeks in China, an experience he calls “invaluable.”)

Davis opted for the Global Leadership EMBA over the Global Energy EMBA, because he knew he wanted to run a company someday. “Just looking at the people around me who had degrees and who didn’t have degrees, I knew I didn’t want

to be an engineer,” he says. “I knew business was what I wanted to do. So I really focused on the leadership aspect of it.”

Apparently, it’s working.

Based in Needville, Texas, HOC has grown from two employees in 2013 to more than 20 today. Davis’ wife, Collette, an accountant with a BBA from the University of Texas at Permian Basin, recently came on board as HOC’s CFO. The Davises are the sole owners of the company.

So what exactly does Hydra do?

Davis likens it to a “general contractor you’d see around town that builds houses.” The only difference: It works on platforms and floating structures in the offshore waters of Texas and Louisiana. It can do anything from change light bulbs to set tsunami buoys for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

“The buoys have all kinds of weather sensors on them,” Davis explains of a recent job. “They are able to track currents and waves and rain

and temperatures, and all that critical information is reported back to the scientist through satellite communication.”

Davis loves to tell the story about the bank that refused his first loan; six months later, after reviewing HOC’s financial records, the bank loaned Davis more than 143 times his original request. He believes Bauer made the difference.

“When I was able to convince them I was the right guy to give a \$4.3 million loan to, it’s because I understood the language they were talking. It wasn’t any one particular class (at Bauer) — or any one fundamental skill they taught me. It was just being there, doing the work and learning how to speak the language.”

No doubt the lender was impressed by the vision and derring-do of a man who went from making \$8 an hour to running a multimillion-dollar business.

It only took 10 years. Just imagine the next 10.