

David Townsend: Caring for Yourself and Humanity

6 August 2020



FESTIVAL of INNOVATION SHOWCASE



“ *Founded in 2013, TownRock Energy is an award-winning geothermal energy consultancy based in Edinburgh, Scotland. The leading specialist in all aspects of the UK’s geothermal resources. Our mission is to access the abundant geothermal energy of the subsurface to provide zero-carbon, 24-hour renewable heating and cooling to industrial, commercial and domestic energy users.*

We are a passionate, innovative and diverse company that strives to minimize the energy industries negative impact on the environment and support all sustainable and safe methods of non-fossil low carbon energy generation to help mitigate the detrimental effects of climate change.

The world can seem full of problems. Inequality, pandemics, racism, climate change, resource over-extraction, big loss, divisive politics, crap leadership, and so on. This can feel overwhelming. However, the world has always seen problems, and yet we have continued to evolve as a species, forever adapting and, yes, improving. We are living

the greatest time in humanity's existence, with the lowest levels of conflict and poverty and the highest levels of freedom and opportunity that have ever been. Many of these improvements have been the result of intrepid entrepreneurs, activists, philanthropists and politicians who have set out to solve a problem and succeeded against all odds.

I founded my company TownRock Energy to promote and develop geothermal energy in the UK, with the mission to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our energy sector. I was inspired by the enormous amount of renewable heat underneath our feet whilst completing my BSc Geology degree at the University of St Andrews, and SIE's Young Innovators Challenge was the nudge I needed to take the leap and set up my own business. I founded TownRock Energy seven years ago, and what a rollercoaster it has been, always adapting the companies offering and focus to changes in the energy market and government policy. Among all the awards, client contracts, late night report writing and early morning conference talks, what I consider my biggest accomplishment is having paid myself enough to live on and not broken myself doing it.

Finding a balance is the most important thing in your life. Burning out by overworking helps no-one. Being the best version of yourself possible inspires and motivates the people around you to be better, creating a positive ripple of change. The best thing about running a business is the general ability to decide your own work schedule. When I feel myself getting stuck, stressed out, worn out or burned out, I take an afternoon off and mountain bike or play golf, walk around a forest or along a beach, party, or just lie in bed and watch Netflix. I do whatever I feel I need to recharge my mind and my soul.



David winning the Energy Entrepreneurship Award at the Heriot-Watt Scottish Energy News 'Researcher of the Year' Awards 2015

I am inspired by quite a few people, but one man stands out: the author and mental health activist Matt Haig. He is incredibly open about his struggles with depression and anxiety and is really helping to destigmatise mental health. His books have helped thousands of people, me included, when stress and anxiety have felt overwhelming.

As Matt Haig quoted from Kierkegaard – Danish theologian, philosopher and all-round legend – in his book *How To Stop Time*: "Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom". The world has endless opportunities, and for our social media generation this can feel completely overwhelming. How do you choose what to do with your life when there are so many options? Why does everyone else seem to have it sorted: travel-vlogging the world as an Instagram influencer-model-entrepreneur-Olympic medallist? My advice to you: find something you care about, identify an issue that needs addressing, read about it, and talk to experts in the field to find out what business or job opportunities exist in that space. Then chase that dream.

The future is shaped by all our actions right now. If you want the future to be better, then do something about it. Get political, write / vlog about your passion, tell companies how you think they could improve, organise a local (or virtual) mee like-minded people by finding them on LinkedIn. Decide what you want the world to look like and believe it can be actions will follow.

Finally, you must have patience. Change often appears to move at a glacial pace which can be disheartening. However, change is inevitable and there is not a whole lot on Earth that can stop a glacier. Your vision may take a whole career to materialise. Do not lose faith. Keep chipping away at those obstacles. The fun is in the journey, not the destination. Take care of yourself, take breaks often (proper breaks mean no screens!), and talk to everyone you meet about your vision, because you never know who will get back in touch in 5 or 10 years' time to help you. Good luck.

– David Townsend, TownRock Energy



<https://youtube.com/watch?v=>

