



Interview with an Entrepreneur

L. David Higuera Verdejo,
Founder and Manager of
Higuera Ingeniería

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Scope of the Interview

In this interview, I will extract and overview the main issues and challenges that an entrepreneur faces in order to success through a small business (Small and Medium Enterprises - SMEs).

The interview is based on L. David Higuera Verdejo, founder and manager of Higuera Ingeniería, an engineering business (SMEs) with services focus on drafting, execution and processing of industrial, residential and commercial projects, until complete legalization.



Figure 1. Business location (Santander)

The company is located in the City of Santander, capital of the Autonomous Community of Cantabria and situated on the north coast of Spain.

With a population of 178,465 inhabitants and a conurbation area of 588 656, Santander is the service centre of the region, containing important public and private organisations as the University Hospital of Cantabria or Santander Group, with also an strong influence of leisure and tourism in the regional economy.

Is within the region where the company has its main area of operation, although nowadays the national market is offering a wide range of projects that the company is starting to evaluate and carrying out.

Company Specifications:

Name of the company: **Higuera Ingeniería (www.higueraingenieria.es)**

Location: **Santander (Spain)**

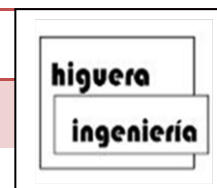
Sector: **SMEs Engineering: Industrial Engineering Services.**

Date of foundation: **2002**

Founder and Manager: **L. David Higuera Verdejo**

Background: **Bachelor Degree in Industrial Engineering at University of Cantabria (Spain).**

Number of employees: **one, with university studies.**



After this brief presentation of the company and the entrepreneur background, the interview will be presented in the next pages, overviewing the main questions and responses from L. David Higuera Verdejo, founder and manager of the company.

Starting up the business:

What is your Background and where did you study?

I studied in Santander, both my undergraduate and graduate education in public institutions.

I am Graduated in Industrial Engineering at University of Cantabria and Chartered Engineer by The Official College of Industrial Engineers of Cantabria.

Also, I was born in Santander and I have grown up here.

What did you do before set up the business? Your previous experience:

After finishing my degree, I started to work in a company related with Red Eléctrica Española, the electricity transmission operator of Spain as Chief Supervisor in the Construction Operations Section.

Also, I assisted to small businesses and professionals in the architecture and engineering sector in projects related with electricity installations.

What motivated you to get into the business?

Do not rely on other people or companies and be my own boss.

Also, an important handicap related with setting up my own business was the possibility to live in the city where I was born and where I have got my family and friends.

How did you come up with the idea for the business? When did you finally decide to start your own business? There was any influence on you?

After gather important experience in the engineering field and work close to other colleagues who had set up their own business, I started to think about become in my own boss. Also, there was a high demand in the engineering sector at that time, where many companies were interested in hire my services.

On the other hand, friends, especially those who were immersed in the sector, encouraged me to step forward in my idea of set up my own company.

What resources did you have to start the business and how did you obtain any other resources needed? Where did you started?

I started to work from home; fortunately the consulting industry does not need from many resources, so I just needed a good computer, books and a quiet room to work.

What were you trying to achieve with the business?

Trying to be my own boss, finding a way of life in which I work for me in what I like.

Did you start the business alone or did you have partners? If so, are they still with you? If not, why? Is there any employee working for you?

Before set up Higuera Ingenieria, I thought about create a company with a colleague but finally we kept employed by other companies.

Finally in 2004, I founded my own business until today.

As for employees, my business is formed by me and a higher educational employee who has been with me since mostly the creation of the business.

In term of business Issues:

How has the business grown since start-up, and how does this compare to initial expectations? And also, what actions or factors have allowed the business to grow?

In 2014, the company completed 10 years. Initially, the expectations were uncertain, although the early years coincided with a high economic activity in Spain, experiencing a quick growth between 2002 and 2008 reaching a maximum in 2009 (before the economic recession).

Due to our expertise in facility design and processing, along with a general vision of the company in terms of its diversification in the field of Industrial Engineering, Higuera Ingeniería has been growing and what is most important, we are still on the business in these times of crisis that are impacting massively in the Spanish SMEs.

So, the answer therefore is that the initial expectations have been more than fulfilled.

What have been the key actions that you have taken that have helped the business grow?

Perhaps, our personalized customer service, the use of new IT tools and our presence on the network (website, other specialized pages, etc.).

What have been the key challenges along the way?

The biggest challenges have been related with creating a customer base of confidence and achieve a sustainable growth.

How has the business changed during these 10 years?

The business has changed slightly, now there is more demand for quality in the project, also implementing and controlling costs is a key factor in the engineering consulting sector.

But, maybe the biggest change has been triggered by the entry into force of Directive 2010/31 on energy efficiency of buildings, which has opened a major new field of activity.

How do you market and promote your business?

Our best promotions are our customers and friends as well as our presence in the web.

Who helps you develop the strategy for your business?

Ourselves, learning from our own experience.

Who else has been involved in growing the business?

People close to me, especially colleagues and family.

Which companies do you see as key competitors, and why? Which companies do you most admire, and why?

My competitors are other similar companies to ours, although in a nearby geographical environment we believe that there is no other company with our specialization in a wide range of industrial engineering fields.

As for companies in which we look, are others much bigger in which we are interested in how they work and manage projects.

Personal Issues

How has your role changed since start-up?

During these 10 years, I have gained more experience in terms of project management, correcting errors in the way of working and something very important, we have not stopped to keep learning and training in the new merging fields and challenges.

What sacrifices have you had to make in order to grow your business? Do you enjoy a good work/life balance?

I have never considered a sacrifice to run a business, because it is my own business and I have always considered a good thing both personally and professionally.

In terms of work/life balance, I always try to spare as much time as possible with my family and friends and I think that I enjoy a good balance.

Do you have any guiding principles in business?

Absolutely, the first one is to serve all customers equally and the second, to be as professional as possible, meeting deadlines and leave nothing pending.

What advice would you give to someone starting a business?

First of all, it is a must carrying out a market research and track down your potential customers. Secondly, you must be well trained with experience in the sector.

Also, it is very important to know your competition and be very serious in business, never wait more than 24 hours to return a call from someone who is waiting.

The future

Where next? What are your key objectives for the next few years?

Continuous training and seeking for emerging markets and opportunities.

Where do you see your role in the future? Would you consider start a new business?

I see my future in the company, expanding into new technological fields and maintaining the existing market and customers.

As for new ventures, I do not contemplate starting a company different from the Industrial Engineering business.

If you could have three wishes, what would they be?

Keep going, grow steadily and face the new technological challenges from the vanguard and efficiency.