



## Don Golini

President of QED Technologies

*"So easy it seems once found, yet when unfound  
most would have thought impossible."*

*John Milton*

Don Golini remembers his turning point quite clearly, and while it's not exactly an instance of high drama as might be expected, it highlights the importance of individuals and small gestures that ironically defines Don's entire outlook.

***The moment came when he was in his late teenage years, sitting in the driveway at his friend's house in his car, a 1972 Dodge Polara, listening to the Beatles. Influenced perhaps by the counter-culture ambience of their soundtrack, the discussion between Don and his friend turned to careers and joining the workforce; the debate was: do you want to work for money, or do you want to have a real passion for what you do? In a climate where many people viewed those two options as a strict dichotomy, each one excluding the other, Don recognized that he wanted to succeed, but also needed to do so with passion. Without making compromises, he wanted to forge his own way and be recognized.***

Don's ambition to succeed in an area that he was passionate about was helped along no doubt by his home life and upbringing. His parents weren't wealthy, and both held

down local 9 to 5 jobs in order to support the household; but they always put their faith in Don and gave him a very strong sense of self-confidence, leading Don to feel that there were quite literally no limits to what he was capable of achieving.

Needless to say, this “no limits” personality of Don’s led to his taking interesting approaches to various challenges throughout his life. When he first entered college, Don enrolled in pre-med studies, but he wasn’t exactly in the highest ranks as far as academics were concerned. Although he held his own in such a competitive field, Don’s interest in engineering did eventually win out and he changed his major. Not wanting to settle for anything that could be termed “mundane”, Don knew that he would want to pursue a unique specialty even within engineering - one that would satisfy his passions and set him apart from the crowd. So optical engineering it was.

After graduation, Don went to work at Itek Optical Systems as an engineer. He says that he chose this company not so much for the salary that he received there, but for the company's outstanding reputation in the industry. Thanks to Itek’s somewhat liberal business structure and unique culture, Don not only received direct feedback on his work from all levels of the company, but he was also able to give feedback to anyone, regardless of their position or stature. At times, he even recalls giving his opinion directly to the CEO. This was a business model that greatly appealed to Don and impressed him so much that he still refers to it when managing his own business today.

It was during this time that Don received something of a booster shot, reaffirming his belief that **pursuing one’s passions works in tandem with the pursuit of success.** A much older co-worker by the name of Witkor Rupp knew a lot about optical manufacturing, and he told Don that if he were to specialize in such a rapidly growing and essential field, he would never find himself wanting for work. Rather, people would be crawling over one another to offer him jobs. The field really intrigued Don, and helped him put into clear belief his philosophy that passion and success go hand in hand. As he himself puts it:

**"Spend ten years becoming an expert at something... if it can be differentiated and specialized, even better... because if you're the best at something, you can leverage that."**

Don received his master's degree in optical engineering and realized that his mentor's words had held true. His position at Itek was so secure that he could have worked there forever if he wanted to, but as Don tells it, he wanted more. Around this time, he happened to meet an Eastman Kodak executive by the name of Harvey Pollicove, who was working at the University of Rochester's Center for Optics Manufacturing. The two of them hit it off famously, and Don went to work for him for four years, learning more about the ins and outs of the optical industry. Drawing on his own personal beliefs about management, personal passions and a no-limit attitude, Don met with success in this field as well, but would again turn to something new after only four years.

At last drawing together all of his influences, Don finally found what he describes as his own way in life. Combining his commitment to his work and his personal passion (themselves one and the same), his self-confidence, his technical expertise in the field of optical engineering, and his strong beliefs in company culture held over from Itek, Don drew up his own business plan. Don went to his wife Tracey, to tell her that he wanted to start his own business and received her unwavering support and trust. In 1996, he opened QED Technologies, a manufacturing company involved in optical technology and polishing. It operated under Don's own personal convictions, with a mission statement emphasizing the importance of a highly diverse body of workers, each of whom are able to contribute their own individual passion and value. Filling a real niche in the optical market, Don's company quickly met with great success. Today, QED is a market leader in the United States, but also has offices in Europe and Asia, surpassing even Don's own expectations.

When asked about the future, Don indicates, not surprisingly, that he wants to continue to do unique and

unexpected things. No matter what he does, however, he says he always intends to adhere to that fundamental premise of never divorcing passion from work and using that to develop an area of desirable technical expertise that has already brought him so far.