



## **Tom Hassett**

President of T & L Automatics

*"Nobody will believe in you, unless you believe in yourself."  
Liberace*

Tom Hassett is an individual who has not only had a turning point, but a truly defining characteristic as well. Everything about Tom demonstrates the aggressive attitude and merciless pursuit of success that has gotten him so far, from his straightforward manner of speaking to the history that has helped define him.

Born into what might be called something of an underdog status, Tom was the youngest child in his family, despite being taller than average height (his present day stature is an imposing 6' 4"). In school, he routinely got poor grades despite constantly being told by his teachers how intelligent he was, and how he just simply wasn't working up to his potential. It was something of a precarious time for Tom, and in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade yearbook he was even voted most likely to be held back! Yet he viewed all of this with something of a detached perspective, continuing to persevere. It wasn't until the 10<sup>th</sup> grade that he began to prove the suspicions of his teachers correct and get excellent marks. Tom indicates that, had they had modern-day diagnosis back then, he might very well have been told he had an attention deficit disorder. Why is any of this relevant? Because, quite simply, it demonstrates a critical fact about Tom: to never give up.

Tom did have a turning point, but it wouldn't occur until after he had graduated high school.

***Despite being given the option to attend Rochester Institute of Technology, Tom chose to enter the Army. His ambition was to be a helicopter pilot, and though he met all the skill requirements for the position, he was eventually passed over for the job due to being too tall. Suddenly, he was relegated to an infantry position and found himself in a prime position to be shipped to Vietnam.***

***At first he wasn't too afraid, since he excelled at all of his physical tests and was a good soldier, but one day at his station in Fort Gordon, Georgia, Tom was given the opportunity to walk the wards of the Fort hospital and today can still recall hearing the moaning sounds of the wounded soldiers. He went to meet someone that was there, the brother of a family friend by the name of Fitzgerald, who had been to Vietnam and had come back wounded. Speaking with him terrified Tom, as he was easily able to imagine himself coming home to the same fate.***

***Suddenly faced with a realistic view of his prospects, Tom first adopted the aggressive salesmanship tactics that have taken him so far. Knowing that soldiers with certain qualities were in demand in the European theatre of Southern Germany, Tom began to do what was necessary to get transferred there, and thus to stay out of Vietnam. He certainly possessed the skills that were in demand, and before long, he says, his natural skills as an assertive and aggressive leader began to emerge. He found himself actually liking his job and he showed such a fine command of leadership skills that he was even asked to command soldiers of higher ranks than himself on several occasions. Having taken control of the circumstances around him, Tom walked away with a new outlook on things that would go on to define the rest of his life:***

**"You can't let life run you, you have to go out and run your life."**

Upon returning from Europe, Tom's leadership qualities proved to be a powerful asset to him professionally. He first went to work at a business his father was a partner in as a night foreman. Before long, he was advanced to the position of day foreman and expanded to other jobs as well, in an attempt to gain as much experience as he could. At this same time, Tom met his wife and began to attend school at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Growing dissatisfied with the conditions of working under others, he decided to start his own company along with his father. To put things in perspective, this means he was working two jobs at once, developing his own business and attending school at the same time. Without the aggressive mentality, penchant for self-organization and leadership skills that he had so come to value, it seems practically impossible that Tom would have succeeded.

But succeed he did. Though his manufacturing company, T & L Automatics, got off to something of a slow start, Tom was there to see it through. Knowing fully how well he could do any job that was given to him, Tom was not afraid to make "cold calls". This means that he would often drive upwards of four to five hours to Cleveland in order to call upon the employees at Parker, a very large company, in an attempt to make contacts there. Due to his persistence, he did eventually make an impression upon them. Once his foot was in the door, Tom says it was his reputation that did the talking. T & L Automatics was able to do any job they were given in a professional and straightforward manner, thanks to Tom's leadership, and as such it began to be said of Tom **"if he tells you he's going to do it, it will get done."**

Subsequently, he got lots of business with Parker, and even more through the positive word of mouth generated by the professional reputation he had built up with them.

As one might expect, the lesson of the importance of selling oneself with an aggressive and unrelenting attitude has not diminished in importance over time with Tom. Even after having met with great success in his business, he continues to look to the future. Sleeping a mere three hours a night, Tom uses every spare moment he can to think about things, to analyze where he's come from and where he's going. When asked about the future of his business, he has something very blunt to say:

**"If you don't grow, you're dead."**

Intending to stay in the game for the long run, Tom constantly redefines the paradigm of T & L Automatics, having recently hired a new director of marketing, and constantly pushing his way into manufacturing new types of products and figuring out the best ways to work with them. Always moving forward, always confident and always stressing his strengths, Tom Hassett has struck upon a surefire recipe for success, and it's one that he recommends to others wholeheartedly.