

Friday, March 20, 2009

## Tommy Burt

Co-founder, Burt-Watts Industries, Inc.

Austin Business Journal - by [Kate Harrington](#) ABJ Staff

Tommy Burt shoots from the hip. A self-labeled demanding boss, he pushes himself and his colleagues to outperform in the construction industry.



Burt has been in construction for more than 15 years. Four years ago, the company he helps run as principal began to expand and diversify its work, and the result has been clients and projects that range from health care to tenant improvement. Burt said that diversification has been a key element of success for Burt-Watts over the years, and it has also helped the company start 2009 strong.

Burt is a member of the Real Estate Council of Austin, Commercial Leasing Brokers of Austin, Associated Builders and Contractors and Associated General Contractors.

He's also an avid golfer — a member of the First Tee of Greater Austin, fisherman and all-around devotee of country music and the Austin Hill Country.

### **What motivates you?**

My wife, children and their support — and my staff and how hard they work to achieve unbelievable results.

### **What annoys you?**

Excuses.

### **Who's influenced you the most in your career?**

My grandparents and parents.

### **What's been your biggest accomplishment so far?**

The quality of friendship and relationships that I've been able to establish through business.

### **What's been your biggest challenge?**

Trying to make everyone happy.

**What was your first job?**

Cleaning out horse stalls for my grandfather.

**If you weren't running Burt-Watts, what would your dream job be?**

Being Tiger Woods' adopted child.

**What kind of boss are you?**

Highly demanding.

**What's bookmarked on your Web browser?**

ESPN and Golf Magazine.

**What's the best thing about Austin?**

The Hill Country.

**What's the worst thing about Austin?**

The Pier [on Lake Austin] closing.

**Where was your best vacation?**

Europe — specifically, Italy and Spain.

**Where would you like to go next?**

I'm going to Cabo San Lucas in August.

**Mac or PC?**

PC.

**What's the most influential book you've ever read?**

The Bible.

**What's your favorite food?**

South Austin Mexican food.

**Have you ever had a brush with death? And if so, how did you get out of it?**

I fought a 200-pound black tip shark for two hours with a 20-pound [fishing line] once. It felt like I was dying.

**What's in your iPod?**

Reckless Kelly, Cross Canadian Ragweed, Robert Earle Keen, George Jones, Conway Twitty and Pat Green.

**What do you think is the toughest part about starting a business?**

Finding the right mix and team of employees.

**How do you unwind?**

Golf, red wine and cigars.

**Do you prefer sunrise or sunset?**

Sunrise (construction starts early).

**What's the latest movie that you've seen?**

Madagascar 2 — at least 45 times with my 2 1/2-year-old son.

**Do you get your news from the papers, online or TV?**

Online.

**Are you a native Texan?**

Born and raised.

**If you could time travel, where (in time) would you go?**

I would go back about 16 months ago so I could have warned everyone about the cause and effect of the economic downturn.

**What's something your colleagues may not know about you?**

I enjoy the pressure.