

# Grahame Dunling

## Horticulture Business Development / Chief Operating Officer.

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Has the right to work in the EU - Yes

## Summary

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I am a Third generation of a Horticultural business family. After gaining Business Management, Glasshouse Management and City & Guilds in accountancy I joined the family horticultural business based in Cottingham where I worked for 2 years before leaving to rent a 3 acre glasshouse growing lettuce for local supermarkets. After 3 years I bought a 14 acre green field site and built my own glasshouse nursery and dwelling house while also growing crops on the rented site. I have project management and business building skills that I first gained while building my own glasshouse nursery and dwelling house. Over the past 40 years I have gained experience in both start up business and running established businesses. I have experience in building Horticultural Businesses worldwide Including wholesale, retail, corporate and public customers. I also have extensive business contacts worldwide both in the manufacturing and horticultural world. I have built business relationships with leading authorities in the hydroponic industry as well as Manufacturing & the service industries. I like to build lasting business relationships that can have an impact on the bottom line margins.

## Employment History

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### **Badai Farms**

#### **May 2016 – Present**

- A Vertical Farm in Dubai that is going to grow Gourmet Salads and Herbs for the high class Gourmet Restaurant trade and hospitality industry. After studying the market we found there was a gap in the market that my skills fill
- Local Quality Salads
- Salads Grown to Protocols & Traceability
- A Better than Organic product
- No pesticides
- No Artificial Feed or external Fertilizers used
- Grown using pure H2o
- Employ Local GCC companies to build to my design
- Grown inside a warehouse (Using a tried and trusted formula that has worked before)
- Using specially designed LED light spectrums to mimic the sunlight.

### **Peninsula farms**

#### **May 2014 – Present: Chief Operating Officer**

#### **Salary – + House + Car + Expenses + Bonus**

I have been promoted to C.O.O from may the 1<sup>st</sup> the brief here is to take control of the whole business from top to Bottom and turn it into the leading Horticultural Business in Bahrain and the GCC.

- **In two years took it from a \$115,000 to \$1,060,000 Business with the same area and staff.**
- **Wrote a paper on Sustainability and Horticulture in Bahrain for the University & Government**
- Built new staff accommodation to improve moral
- Promoted some staff from worker to Supervisor, so we have team leaders in each greenhouse
- Totally revamped the management style of the company to give responsibility for development.
- Introduced new sales staff and merchandisers to keep an close watch on our sales and marketing procedures
- Introduced better communication lines with our sales team to customer buyers.
- Introduced Salanova Lettuce to improve the taste and texture of Lettuce in Bahrain
- Introducing own label branding to our range of products
- Introduced better packing facilities and procedures to ensure quality goods reach our customers.
- Implementing a maintenance program to stop emergency repairs
- Designed and built a new cooling system for our greenhouses so we can grow through the summer.
- Developed a commercial Aeroponic tomato grow system this saves water and feed and allows more control
- Advising students in Bahrain how computers work in Horticulture and showing them this is not a muddy boots Business and we need all types of design and software engineers to design Greenhouses and automated cooling system.

## **Peninsula Farms: (Horticultural Business Development Manager)**

Jan 2014—May 2016

### **Salary – + House + Car + Expenses**

I came for three days as a consultant and was offered a position on the first day as I identified the problems they were having as soon as I walked in the greenhouse. My role was to give complete staff training and development in greenhouse crop work, to oversee a planting and harvest schedule and to make improvements to the Nursery and general infrastructure of the nursery. It is a 10 acre greenhouse complex with a further 10 acres planned for the next two years.

- Used my contacts to build a Washing and drying unit for tomatoes and salads in China to improve our quality of product going out the gate.
- Improved staff working conditions and introduced staff training
- Introduced a flow working system so no more time wasting.
- Introduced a more identifiable sales technique for selling the produce
- Reduced the number of customers from 35 to 8 but increased sales tenfold through better service and better quality produce.
- Identified Supermarket customers and forged relationships to grow quality crops under contract for them
- Cut the C.O.G.S. by reduced labour and transport cost and more efficiency
- Was given a 12 month target for a near breakeven point achieved this in 5 months.
- Identified a new market for our waste product turning a waste product, earning \$0,000 and costing \$2,000 into a profitable & marketable Business Product.

### **Self Employed Consultant**

August -2010—Jan -2014

I went to Hong Kong to look at building an indoor showroom to promote the technology available for growing crops in an indoor environment. For this role I was asked to source all the products needed from Chinese and Asian manufactures and “Brand” all the items under the VFI Brand name. This is some instances meant identifying companies who could make products that were new to them but within their capabilities of manufacture. I also had to identify and put in place, ( VFI is now the leading Grower & Importer of Fresh Salads in Hong Kong / China )

- Identify and recruit staff for the growing operation
- Identify and implement machinery for the project
- Brand under the VFI Brand name
- Designed a New Plastic tray for the growing of Micro and Baby leaf salads
- Source Plastic Injection and Vacuum forming companies to make a new tray design.
- Identify Markets and customers for the produce grown ( High Quality Gourmet Salads )
- Help to create partnerships with Restaurants ect for the produce
- Identify Products that was needed for the Restaurants
- Set up a NPD Area for the growing of edible plants for the Restaurants.
- Introduce safe working practices and flow charts for the produce
- Introduce traceability for all the produce from seed to plate.
- I sourced embroidered work wear to improve corporate image of VFI.
- Started LOCAL SALADS as my own Brand to promote local grown salads.
- Introduced [www.localsalads.com](http://www.localsalads.com) as a web site and this is also mobile friendly

When this role finished I returned to the UK where I have worked as an Independent consultant for companies where I designed an Indoor Vertical growing system using Induction lighting, I have also designed an Aquaponic system using the technology used in Horticulture to analyze the fish waste and supplement this with the feed for the correct nutrient needs of the plant. I am seeking funding to build a indoor growing unit that can grow salads and fruiting plants. Once this system is built it can then be rolled out worldwide this is using technologies that are already in use today in Horticulture. I have redesigned a commercial growing system to make it work in the growing of plants for the Local Indoor or Vertical Growing market. I want to Introduce Flavour back into Salads instead of Salads that are left on the Plate.

- Implemented Mobile web sites ( Web sites that are viewable on your mobile phone) These are called thumb friendly as the web site is optimized for the smart phone and makes navigating far easier. Try [www.localsalads.com](http://www.localsalads.com) on your smart phone.
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### **Kentucky & Louisville**

- Been to the US to help Start Urban growing companies and advise on growing methods.
- Designed Indoor growing system that was wheelchair friendly for disabled workers but also commercially viable.
- Government funded for the employment of disabled
- Again I had to use Local American Companies so that Local people was given employment and to help the Local economy.
- Totally redesigned an Aquaponic Growing system to be commercial viable and the first of its kind.

## **Horticulture Design Manager**

### **Valcent eu**

June 2009 – August 2010

Launceston , UNITED KINGDOM

£ 45,000 Yearly + House & car

I was asked to Join Valcent after they had heard about my design for a vertical growing system . I was Responsible for developing the AlphaCrop system and also for Redesigning the VertiCrop Growing System which is now running both in the UK and Vancouver. For this I had to change the way the system worked by

- Redesigning the hanger system
- Designing a brand new tray for the system to improve efficiency of the system but this had to still grow the crops.
- Identify a Plastic forming UK Company to produce the tray and persuade them to design the mold needed.
- Identify crops to be grown in the space provided that would give the return on capital expenditure.
- Implement and identify Companies who could do the engineering work needed
- Identify control companies to design new control technologies
- Identify new spinning lighting technology
- When the system was redesigned my role went to identifying customers around the world for the system. This meant going to places like Dubai, Qatar, Japan and Hong Kong.
- This also meant identifying Local crops which could be grown on the system, also talking to Local supermarkets and wholesalers to show them how by selling crops grown on this system they could improve food security and also food quality.
- I was the sole designer of the AlphaCrop system which is based on an A-Frame design which allows the light to reach all the plants as they travel round the A-Frame.
- The system could be bought as a 3 m length system then added to in multiples of three m with no extra motors as the design allowed this to be extend from 3 m up to 12 m and to a height of 3 m

## **General Manager**

### **FDM Herbs**

January 2008 – May 2009

Warwick , UNITED KINGDOM

£ 35,000 Yearly + House & Car

### **F.D.M. Herbs**

I started in Jan 2008 and my role was to build a micro herb business these are very small herbs grown in trays for their taste and flavour. We only had polythene tunnels but I was assured that investment for a one acre glasshouse was in place, and would be built and ready for the 2009 season, and I would be made a director. We also dry the herbs again this is a unique way of drying that has been developed with the help of the tobacco drying industry in Argentina. In taking on this role I also did all the accounts and invoicing and even the wages. Again in this role I have built my own web-site for the Business and was responsible for sales and deliveries to both local and London based Restaurants. Again I was involved in sales meetings with top Chefs like Glynn Purnell, Sat Bains & Anton Mossiman. We also supplied Lord Rothschild and most of the top Restaurants in London. I also arranged a network of direct deliveries throughout the UK by Courier at a reduced rate. It was here that I also helped to develop an inert media that can be used as a bio fuel after harvest.

We managed this as we had some varieties that were unique to FDM.Herbs. Such as Chocolate mint that had been developed over the years that was used as a sprinkle for the ice cream industry. I also produce CD Business cards that hold text and video to help promote the company. I used this to show the restaurants how we grew the product. We had a logo designed and branded our packaging with the logo, Due to the economic climate the owner decided not to invest in the glasshouse so I started looking to improve the production by growing on Vertical Benches and inside insulated Buildings. This is where I first designed the AlphaCrop unit and was introduced to Valcent eu.

## **Nursery Manager**

### **Chrystal Heart Salad Co**

January 2004 – January 2008

Gilberdyke , UNITED KINGDOM

£ 30,000 Yearly + Expenses

Crystal Heart Salad Co

I was employed as Nursery manager to grow plants for other growers these been in the block format and sales totalled 120,000,000 plants.

In 2005 I was asked to build the bedding plant side of the business in doing this job I was involved in sourcing machinery for the sowing of the plants and also the marketing side as well as the growing side. Part of this was building an e-book presentation for Tesco, this I put onto a business card CD that auto ran when placed into the computer. I also built a giveaway disk with plant information on for customers.

I also had to explain the benefits for commercial users and local authorities of using a block type bedding plant instead of the traditional loose root tray type.

As the bedding plant side was not the main business I had to build a data base for the recording of all the plant sowings and sales.

In Nov 2007 the company decided to contain the bedding plant side to the local trade and gate sales and the opportunity to expand the business was limited.

**General manager  
Preston Nurseries**

February 1993 – December 2004

Hull , UNITED KINGDOM

£ 30,000 Yearly

I was employed as General Manager and asked to take full control of all the nursery's activities including the accounts and wages, as the owner had other business interest.

We were one of the first nurseries that grew cherry tomatoes on Grodan in the UK. We also developed a way of forking the trusses to gain fruit yield by temperature deviation we also grew lettuce, celery and bedding plants.

Regarding the cherry tomatoes again I was the test nursery for a new cherry tomato grader from Greefa in Holland again they installed one worth £80,000 free of charge while I helped develop and design the grader by giving them first hand commercial usage of it.

We supplied Shropshire's with 400,000 celery sticks every year during a six week period from May until 2nd week June. During this period we also raised the level of two glasshouses by extending the height by one metre instead of replacing them. We also created our own branding and box for marketing the produce. Our aim was for Quality & Flavour over the quantity produced so the aim was for a recognized Brand that spoke Quality.

In 1995 we started to develop a fish farm, building fish ponds in the smaller glasshouses. In these we grew the carp for 12 months as we got three years growth in one year with been inside in warmer water.

After 12 months we built a purpose built Indoor hatchery with heated water and a night and day dimmer lighting system to breed our own carp to save buying them in. This was all controlled by a computer system for the water temperature and lighting. We also looked into building and heating 20 X 5,000 gall tanks. Again we was told that this could not be done as all the tanks were linked it was too much water to heat with that amount of control.

Again with Priva as a control unit we managed to heat the water with accuracy of 1 dc lift per day so we could take it from an ambient temperature of 10c up to 19c in a total of nine days this gave the fish the impression that it was summer as every 1c lift we also gave them more light and this with a higher feed content which induced growth. We also bought in high quality Japanese Koi and these we sold to the public and also wholesaled them to other retailers. In doing this I took on the role of sales person and also got a deal with a Dutch fish food manufacture so that we could repackage there food and retail it as our own branded food. I also built my own web-site to promote the sales and profile of the company. By 2001 the company had increased turnover from £60,000 to over £1,800,000 a year

**Owner - Tudor Nurseries**

1977-1992

I left my father's employment and rented a 3 acre glasshouse nursery where I grew Lettuce and Indoor Celery for Local supermarkets then when Centralized buying came in I supplied a growers co-operative with products. To be able to do this we had to set up a traceability record and we went one further at this time and we included a Harvest production record which told us how many heads we planted and how many where class one from each house to identify either soil or staffing problems. Two years Later I bought my own 14 acre Field on which I designed and built my own 6 acre glasshouse nursery, Including roadways , packing shed and also a dwelling house. This was built while also producing crops from the rented site.

- Identify and solve problems
- Identify and promote staff to positions of responsibility
- Identify and create a brand for identification of our produce (Tudor Produce)
- Records in place for full traceability and stock control
- Create S.O.P for each nursery so produce was grown to the same standard
- Train staff to be responsible for their own work and introduced flexi time working
- Responsibility for sales and marketing and quality control
- Took on the responsibility of running my Fathers nursery as an independent company for him so that he could retire but remain active as a director in the company.
- Lowered the cost of inputs for him by adding them to my bulk orders
- Also added his produce to my own to increase volume and also prices returned for him.

I grew salad crops for supermarkets and I had to build a customer base to sell the products. I employed a growing Manager as I took on the role of Sales and Business development as fresh produce requires selling based on quality and I felt that I was best placed to sell the quality of our produce and timelines that I promised, I was also in a position to enforce and implement. I also built the "Tudor Brand" based on old fashioned tasty food. This also gave me a focus on Brand design & buying and by changing the way I bought my packaging I was able to cut my expenses by 10% . I also negotiated a massive discount for installing the first Priva irrigation computer on the nursery and used it to demonstrate the system to other growers and in return it was installed at a much discounted rate. We also grew chrysanthemums & dahlias which we used to take our own cuttings from. In 1990 the recession started and the price for salad crops dropped and interest rates went up to 19% and in 1992, I decided to sell the business as I was offered a Managers position.

## **D.Dunling & Son**

1973-1976

After leaving school I worked with my Father on his glasshouse nursery growing flowers, and salad crops. I also attended Bishop Burton College and gained a glasshouse Management and Business Management certificate. I also gained a City and Guilds in accountancy.

## **Education History**

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**Highest qualification** HNC, City and Guild Dip./Cert. - NVQ Level 4

### **Bishop Burton Collage**

Jan 1973 – Dec 1976 ( 4 years )

Business Management Horticulture Pass

Glasshouse management Horticulture Pass

Accountancy Horticulture City & Guilds Pass

I went to Bishop Burton Collage for 4 years to study Horticulture Business.

While there I gained the Business Management, Glasshouse Management and City & Guilds In Accountancy.

## **Additional Information**

During my roles I have have found the need to develop new products so if what is needed if at all possible it can be found or developed. I can work as part of a team or on an individual role and I am at home making Decisions where and when they have to be made. I am a can do person and competent in most roles of Business including Sales and I am a customer person believing in that the customer should be informed of every aspect of the operation and dealings and that you should be available for contact when needed and to suit overseas need and there time frame.