

# Dandin Chronicles

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## **A Different Kind of World, A Different Kind of Company**

*CEO Dewayne Hendricks on the importance of doing business with honor*

In Tonga, they still have the tradition where you give your word and you keep it. We've got to be really cognizant of that in the organization here because in the United States we're living in a world where that isn't the case. What's going on in the Valley is often about greed and not about keeping your word.

I would hope to try to instill a culture in the company where you keep your word. You've got to have that consistency.

When this deal started with the Crown Prince in December '98 when we met, he gave me his word to do this and I shook his hand and said, I am going to do it for you. In my mind I knew what I was getting myself into. Whatever it took, I was going to do it.

The Crown Prince has kept his word and here we are. That's the way you've got to do this. That's what's expected.

Especially there in Tonga where all these *palangi* have come over there and ripped people off for centuries, this project has got to be successful.



***Steve Bible joins Dandin after his recent retirement from the US Navy, and will be spearheading the Tonga project. In contrast to his Navy-retiree colleagues who spend their days in boredom and/or McJobs, he's still shaking his head in amazement at his good fortune.***

***"I want a place where I can change the world," he says. "The implications of Dandin's projects, in people's homes and in people's lives—It's a paradigm shift. I don't think people just realize what's about to face them.***

***"That's why it's exciting to be with the Dandin Group. All of those possibilities are there, and it sure beats bagging groceries."***

## **From The Navy to Nuku'alofa**

***Steve Bible on paradigm shifts***

**Make no mistake, Steve Bible is a ham. Ham radio, that is. He's made something of a career of it.**

"I've always taken ham radio and extended it wherever I could. Ham radio to me is the best vehicle to learn and do things, and I can always take a subject and make it ham-radio related. So I automatically always have a project, automatically have a way to adapt something, because I just think to myself, 'Well, how can I make that work in ham radio?'"

Long active in TAPR, the Tucson Amateur Packet Radio association with which Dandin is now collaborating on the design for the TDR-900 radio, Steve has long been involved in TAPR projects.

In the course of his 23-year career in the Navy, Steve found himself attending classes at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, in the mid-'90s, at which point he was involved with the building and launch of an amateur-radio satellite. When Dewayne Hendricks visited the school, Steve was eager to show him the project, which marked Steve's first involvement with spread-spectrum transmission.

The two stayed in touch, and last fall when Dewayne and Greg Jones (another of Steve's longtime TAPR associates) attended an amateur radio conference in Phoenix, they persuaded him to join the Dandin adventure. Recruited particularly for his proficiency at writing microcontroller code, he first worked on programming the PIC code for the TDR-900 radio before being presented with the challenge of supervising the Tonga project.

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No stranger to project management, Steve has garnered varied and useful experience over the course of his naval career. “In my last job,” he says, “I was the chief information officer for the submarine base here. I put in 4.4 million dollars’ worth of equipment. I put in an ATM mesh, brand new fiber in the ground, and a microwave link down to Florida at the OC3 level. I’ve been doing that for the past 2 years.

“I did all the planning; I did all the requirements, research. I documented ‘What is my IT population?’ I went around and documented requirements they had, what programs they need, what kind of bandwidth they need; I identified the people-concentration areas so that I could designate what we call ‘information transfer nodes,’ nodes on the backbone. And when I left they were digging holes and laying conduit for the fiber, and they were installing a microwave tower down in Jacksonville, getting ready to talk to us. So I left a legacy there in that they patted me on the back and said, ‘Sorry you can’t see it finished, but thanks for getting it started.’”

For nine years of his career, he operated power plants aboard nuclear submarines. “What did I gain from my training to operate a nuclear power plant? Just an impeccable feeling for how to do good engineering practices.

“When you turn on a pump in a nuclear power plant, you’re not satisfied that you see a green light that says that pump’s on. No. You look at the flow gauge. You see that the flow goes up. You look at the temperature gauges, because you know what temperature those lines are supposed to be at at that flow rate. You expect to see a transition, and you know how long that transition’s going to be, and you know when it’s going to settle down into a steady state.

“You listen for the circuit breaker to close. You look at the power plant and see the electrical amperes go up.

“And then we also have noise monitors on the pump, and we take a look at that and see whether the pump really came on by listening to the noise monitor, and whether there are any abnormal noises to it.

***Why am I thinking of pulling out the catalog and picking and choosing and deploying it?***

***Why don't I look at the catalog of 2003 and say, "What do I want to be in it?"***

“And *then* you're satisfied that you turned the pump on. That way of thinking can be carried through in a lot of other things.”

Looking at the Tonga project, Steve (who, living in rural Georgia, is himself among the relative connectivity have-nots) finds it a classic example of a scenario that's playing out worldwide: “What Dandin is hoping to do in the wireless realm is put in infrastructure. What is normally either a copper- or a fiber-based infrastructure, there are places in the United States and in the world where it is just too costly to put in that infrastructure.

“For a lot of developing countries, instead of putting in a wire telephone infrastructure, it's actually cheaper to go in and put in a cellular phone infrastructure. We've seen that many times over the past several years. Wireless presents an infrastructure that's a lot less costly than digging holes and burying copper and fiber and putting in the switches to be able to deal with that.”

While he says he's finding it challenging to get up to speed on the technical, regulatory, cultural and other issues affecting the Tonga project, he says the biggest impediment comes from the limits of his own thinking. “We're talking about deploying products that haven't even been developed yet, so there's a challenge here for us. We've got to decide what kind of technologies need to be deployed there. I'm thinking, 'Ok, I'll get out my catalog of wireless products, and I want a dozen of those, a dozen of those,' but the thing of it is, what Dewayne's wanting to do hasn't been done, and there are no products in that catalog to buy from.

“And now my mind's been expanded into thinking, 'Why am I thinking of pulling out the catalog and picking and choosing and deploying it? Why don't I look at the catalog of 2003 and say, "What do I want to be in it?"'”

He recognizes, however, that his ultimate customers, the first-mile users, are unlikely to share his fascination with gadgetry and are more concerned with practical issues. “We're coming in with a wireless infrastructure to be able to provide the Tongans with voice, video and data.

When you look at the infrastructure right now, it's quite interesting.

“Dewayne mentions that there are people there that have been waiting eight years to get a telephone. Now imagine how revolutionary—it's going to be the Bic lighter effect—it'll be when we come in there and say, ‘You want a phone? OK, here you go,’ and of course, there's no wires associated with it, and they're up and running.

“If we go into Tonga and you talk to the average citizen there, they just want the service, and they want it at a reasonable cost. That's our goal for the consumer. They don't care how it's done.”





## Tonga Pride

Tonga, it has often been observed, is noteworthy in never having been conquered or colonized by a foreign power. This quality sets it apart not only from its South Pacific neighbors, but, as Steve Ludvik points out, the U.S., Australia, and in fact most of the world's countries.

The pride of unconquered independence is fundamental to the Tongan national character, and finds expression in language, social custom, and such anomalous-to-the-Western-mind phenomena as a pro-democracy movement that doesn't want to depose the monarch. And, as Tonga stands poised on the brink of a digital revolution, the issue of keeping cultural identity, of dealing with the world while remaining truly Tongan, emerges as crucial.

Economic prosperity that destroys traditional values is generally considered not worth doing. Says Emeline Tuita, Tonga's consul general in San Francisco, "Tourism development is one of the prime examples—other countries have just shot off with their tourism development, but they've lost a lot in the process. In Tonga we say we want it, we realize it's a way of earning foreign exchange, but just looking at how it's being developed and how difficulty really it is for us to give up things, we are not willing to give up our soul for it.

"Tourism is a prime example where a lot has to change to cater for the tastes of somebody else, a lot of physical changes. You make your traditional singing a little bit faster than it should be, wear different costumes, because somebody else likes them better, rather than just portraying yourself as what you are. We say we want tourism. We know it's a foreign exchange earner. But if this is the price we have to pay for it, it's all right. We'll find something else to focus on."

"Which is where this whole technology thing comes in. In the future there's a lot of opportunities for the Internet; in this new Information Age, you can stay home and have your life and make money, but you don't have to have the dramatic physical changes."

Family, religion, and a strong ethic of looking out for each other are vitally important in Tonga. Says Papiloa Foliaki of the Friendly Islander Hotel, “Parents must value their role and prepare their family, their children, their grandchildren to know their values, to know their identity.

“Once the basics are cemented and their feet are on the ground, they can handle anything. They can be millionaires. They can be Internet specialists. They can be M.D.s or pilots. If they connect to God, their spirit is right, body is healthy, mind is positive, they can cope.

“You can tell children that come out of those homes that still practice their cultural connection. Wherever they are, they’re not lost. And that is something.

“To be somebody that you’re not, that is a concern to me for our future. It’s good to be rich. But you got to define if success and rich only mean money, or happiness.”

Tuita concurs. “Tongans want to develop the country because it’s a challenge to. They want to develop it so they become wealthier—but wealthier as Tongans. If they want their lifestyles to become *palangis*, then that’s changing everything. It’s going to make them miserable.”

