

EXECUTIVE CANDIDATE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Dana DeVito • INDUSTRY: Oil & Gas • POSITION: Vice President

01 SETTING THE TONE

DANA DEVITO

Hey, John, thanks so much for coming in today. I really appreciate your time. It's. Taking those moments is really important, so I want to give you a little bit of understanding in what I'm interviewing for. Culture in my organization is the most important thing to me. The quality of people that we bring in is really where we hang our hats. And so I want to make sure that you're going to be a great part of our team, that we'll be able to lift you up as well as have you just integrate really seamlessly with the. The people that we've already got. So to that end, I'm going to start off with the most difficult question out of the gate. Okay. Would you tell me just a little bit about yourself?

JOHN

A little bit. That's always the hardest part in an interview, isn't it? Making precise. Worked in the oil and gas industry for 17 years.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

And I started in the field working up in Pennsylvania in the Marcellus Shale and learned how to geosteering and got a knack for that and started working my way up in the company that I was at and really dug into working more with people than with a product or a service, so to speak. I'd really like to try to grow individuals and. And help the people that are around me.

02 FROM THE RIG TO THE MOTHERSHIP

DANA DEVITO

John, I have to apologize first because I forgot to add something. Forgot to tell you that I may interrupt you and ask for some clarity in questions. So my apologies, but this is one of those moments I'm going to interrupt you. So you start out in the field. You said Pennsylvania. Yeah. So in the field, I can't imagine that you're working with a bunch of people.

JOHN

No, the rigs are pretty confined. There's probably 20, 22 to 30 people on the rig, but they're divided in half. So there's night shift and day shift. So you only really get to interact with around 14 individuals on your shift.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah, so. So as you were moving up through the ranks of the organization, you know, stepping away from field work and moving, maybe the mothership, how did you start to practice or develop those relationships? And what was it that really intrigued you about creating those types of engagements?

JOHN

I grew up a very religious individual. I was raised up in. In a very strict indoctrination, indoctrinated church. And I always was affected and realized that other people are very affected by words. That you use the same phrase that you use to make someone fall in love with you is very similar to a phrase that can cause you to become divorced.

It's all in how you say it and the intent behind it.

Well, I. In the. Ironically enough, through the church, I learned how the preacher would use words to motivate or inspire or on the other side of the spectrum, instill fear. And it fascinated me. So the older I got, the more that I tried to practice that. And I realized that it is a tool that when used for good. Pardon the pun.

DANA DEVITO

Sure.

JOHN

It can be very powerful. You not only affect the individuals around you infect the environment around you. So anyone that even walks into space can feel it.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

It's almost palpable in a positive way versus those individuals that we've all met in our life that are, I guess you would call an Eeyore. They're just. And it's very difficult to be motivated and inspired around those types of individuals. So I've always tried to foster that opposite side of it in myself. And trust me, no one is perfect. And I am probably the most fallible or, you know, Scarred of the individuals that you might run into. But when you focus on it and you make it an intent, it can make a difference. Yeah, I firmly believe it does make a difference.

03 COMMUNICATING IN A "WILD WEST" INDUSTRY

DANA DEVITO

For sure. I. I absolutely agree with you. Oil and gas isn't necessarily known for their soft, emotional side, though.

JOHN

No.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah. So how did. How did that work earlier in your career, as you're starting to.

JOHN

It was challenging. It was very challenging because the guys out there are. Whip it out and see who's is the biggest. There is no emotion. There's no feel like. You don't talk about that kind of stuff. Like it's. It's very wild west. Yeah. And so it was tough on the rig. I was able to do it with my geologist that we would work remotely with in their offices. I started more along those lines because they live in a different world than the people on the rig. They are. They have culture in their. In their headquartered offices.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

And so I used those individuals to start practicing my skills and working with them.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah. You know, gosh, I get so many questions, so thanks. Thanks for setting that table. That's great. Why stick with oil and gas? I mean, I know you're still applying for this position in. In the oil and gas industry. It doesn't. And as you're acknowledging yourself that it isn't the most relational, perhaps, or the most emotionally transparent why stick with this industry in particular?

JOHN

Because there has been a shift and I, I love the industry. I. I become very familiar with it. I'm comfortable with

the ups and downs and the ebbs and the flows of the industry, but the culture and the opposite of the wild west mentality. So civilized business, it's becoming far more common in the oil and gas industry with these operators, so it's not as challenging to work with them anymore. It's actually more fun because they are. It's almost like they're doing what I used to do in the field.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah. Okay. Yeah. So maybe the tip of the spear.

JOHN

For you, by any means. But. But it just so happens that they're trying to salvage because it's known even if you don't work in oil and gas, that it's a hard industry.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

And they're trying to change the narrative of that and they're having to do it through culture, which is probably the best way.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah. So. So you were kind of the tip of the spear for it. And as you're continuing to grow in this industry of oil and gas, what hurdles did you have to manage or walk through? And how is that different in. And I know you've alluded to this a little bit already, but how is that different today than it was a couple years ago? Why is it, why is it still motivating for you now.

04 PATIENCE FORGED ON THE RIG

JOHN

Winning the tough ones over the challenging ones, like the individuals that you're working with that are still in the wild west mentality? Yeah, that.

DANA DEVITO

How do you, how do you do that?

JOHN

Patience.

DANA DEVITO

Okay.

JOHN

I mean, it's something that I'm practicing daily because I used to have none of it.

DANA DEVITO

Oh, yeah, tell me about that. How do you, how do you learn patience in a challenging environment like oil and gas where you know, part of it is through presentation and expression and how you, how are you perceived by those around you?

JOHN

Very interesting question. I guess the only thing that I could say is I was on that first rig in Pennsylvania for nine and a half months straight.

DANA DEVITO

Holy smokes.

JOHN

I knew there was no getting off of it because there were circumstances and situations that had fallen that I had to be there.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

So I just had to accept. And I think that's where my journey along patience started growing, for sure. I had to accept that there was no out. This is what I had to do, and I had to make the best of it.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah. That's such an interesting emotional feel, like there's no out that can seem. That can seem overwhelming, man. I. I'm curious.

JOHN

I think it's what's called people to kill themselves before. Yeah.

DANA DEVITO

Legitimately.

JOHN

Yes. Seriously.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

But I mean, obviously mine was not anywhere near that dire. I was just very isolated.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

And Pennsylvania winners. Well, why.

DANA DEVITO

Why stick through? I mean, it's. It's not. I mean, I understand that you're under contract. Why. Why decide to endure the nine and a half months? Why. Why persevere through that? You have. You truly had a choice.

JOHN

So there was a piece of dangled fruit at the end of that line.

DANA DEVITO

Okay.

JOHN

So there was something that I was promised by the company in exchange for making that sacrifice.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

That I. I would be rewarded.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

So it was, in my eyes, worth the pain if would. Or the.

KEY TAKEAWAY

“I had to accept that there was no out. This is what I had to do, and I had to make the best of it.”

05 PEOPLE WHO SHAPED HIM

DANA DEVITO

I appreciate that. Yeah. Having a. Having a. A goal in mind and willing to persevere through that challenge and difficulty is great. Yeah. I appreciate that. So I'm curious through. Throughout the, you know, as you're. As you were with this, your past organization for quite a few years, and you've found this great level of success, being a vice president at any organization takes some time, energy, and effort and intent to get there. In my experience. Nobody does that alone. So who has walked alongside you through.

JOHN

That.

DANA DEVITO

That you can. You know, just like I said, I've always found that we don't walk these journeys alone. Who. Who. Who's been around you?

JOHN

So two or three individuals. One is my mother. I sound cheesy. I know I have a mama's boy. I will own up to it. But she's 85 and she didn't graduate. She only went through the fifth grade. But her wisdom is so powerful because she just thinks very simplistically and not in a negative way. She doesn't over complicate things.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

My brain tends to over complicate things. So I'll talk things through with her. Like we talk every morning, have a little FaceTime coffee and just. And we'll each talk about stuff. And she will simplify some of the stuff that I tell her. And when you simplify it back to me, it sort of clicks and I'm like, oh, wow. It really wasn't as complicated as I was making it.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

And sometimes things are complicated. And the CEO of the last company that I worked with was an exceptional individual. He was very empathetic. He was. He.

DANA DEVITO

Can I take a step back, though? Like I told you, I warned you I was going to interrupt with. With your. With your mom. When did you start to consider it Wisdom versus frustration. As a, you know, because I know for me looking back at my parents, I'm like, they were, they didn't know anything. They could tell, you know, it was, I would say maybe like 25. I'm like, they're geniuses. What was I doing?

JOHN

No, we. There was a strange era in my family. It was more in the late 30s.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah, gotcha. Okay, cool. Sorry, I, I didn't mean. I just. It always strikes me when I hear that because it, yeah, you're like, you're stupid.

JOHN

Shut up. I hate you. And then all of a sudden they're just mountains of wisdom.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah. So moving on. You were talking about the CEO, that.

JOHN

The CEO of the company was just an exceptional individual. He was a faulted man. I will not say he was perfect, sure. But when there were complicated issues, I was always able to lean on him for guidance and to think through and work through problems. I, I tended to, I used to be very reactionary. And along with that journey of patience, I learned that reacting immediately is not always the best.

The response that you do when you respond immediately is not always the best response to give. So sit on it for a minute and let it marinate,

for lack of a better phrase, and decide which step is the right one to take.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah, it sounds like some of the early growth may have been a little painful for you to learn that lesson within the organization.

JOHN

That's fair statement.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah. But what a great example of patience to reflect on and to try to mirror. Right. And what a great example.

JOHN

Try is the key word.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah, we all do that, don't we? I'm curious, continuing to go on this theme of relationship and the people around you and working to grow that within the industry of oil and gas. Now I know you've worked with a lot of customers and clients over the years. Why don't you tell me about one of your favorite clients, huh?

06 A FAVORITE CLIENT

JOHN

The favorite ones were the easy ones.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah, yeah. But tell me which ones that you like the most. Remote. Just.

JOHN

Yeah. So about halfway into my career, we started working for a middle sized operator out of South Texas and they had some young geologists that was sort of new to me. Most of the companies that I had worked for up until then had been senior GEOs. They were, I would easily say 55 to 65, that era. And so the technology we used to do the jobs was very different. They would use old Excel spreadsheets and manually correlate things with Printed out sheets of paper, whereas I was using software and advanced software, graphing and you know, geomodeling. Yeah, well, the newer younger Geos, they had that tech spark and so it lit a fire in me because I had someone that was using the same tools that I was using.

JOHN

So I was able to collaborate and work with them and discuss projects and share your screen and go through these correlations together versus trying to explain to someone what you were doing or why you saw what you saw. And without being able to show a picture and them understand it. It was very challenging.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

So that was when I sort of fell in love with that group at Geo Southern. They were an exceptional team.

DANA DEVITO

Do you, do you still keep in contact with any of them?

JOHN

I do keep in contact. We still work with one of the Geos. He's at a different company now.

DANA DEVITO

Oh, no kidding. Okay. Yeah, that's great. That's great. So one of the questions that I like to ask, you know, again, thanks for being so willing to have a free form conversation with me. I appreciate that. Gives me a lot of insight into who you are and what you're doing. But a couple things that I like to ask people is I find it fascinating, these journeys that we travel through life, both personally and professionally. So I want to ask you what's one of the most difficult things that you've attempted or accomplished or worked through? And really, I don't even care if you've accomplished or not, but what's one of the most difficult things that you've ever pursued or experienced?

07 THE HARDEST DAY: COVID LAYOFFS

JOHN

I mean, I, I would like probably going to have to say it similar to what a lot of other individuals would say would be some of the pains of COVID but a little different than other people's pains. Ours was not the switch to working remotely. That was a challenge. We had been working remotely for nine years already, so that was old habit, so to speak. But what killed us was the shutdown.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

Which I'm sure you know, everyone else was suffering as well, but we had about 95% of our clients cease operation two week period.

DANA DEVITO

Gosh. What kind of emotional hit was that?

JOHN

I threw up. Yeah, it was weird. Just because we knew what was, you know, it's inevitable. We had five teams at that time and we let go of everyone at the company except for three individuals.

DANA DEVITO

Holy smokes. That's got to be so heartbreaking.

JOHN

It was heartbreaking. I, I had to call 26 people and terminate them in one day.

DANA DEVITO

Wow. How do you navigate? Because that's a. That's an emotional burden that weighs heavy, at least from what I see as we're talking through this. How do you process through that? I mean, every new. Every conversation is new to the individual on the other side of the phone, and yet exactly the same as the one that you've had just beforehand. Like, what. What type of. What does that look like for you, a shot glass?

JOHN

It was painful because you can't. You can't be callous, which is what I wanted to do. Not. Not to them, but put a callus over my emotions and just be very clinical. But these were people that I truly cared about.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

I. I knew their wives, their husbands, some of their kids. I'd worked with them for nine years, so I wasn't able to put that emotional barrier up. So I did have to get vulnerable, and I pretty much cried 26 times that day.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

There is no shortcut through having a tough and emotionally painful conversation.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah. Yeah.

JOHN

Because if I wouldn't have shown or had my emotions, they would have thought that I didn't care. I wasn't being emotional to prove that I cared. But I wasn't going to shut it off because I didn't want to come across cold. But my instinct was to. Because it would protect my emotions.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah.

JOHN

I wouldn't have to feel the hurt if I didn't have those feelings.

DANA DEVITO

Yeah, that's right. That's right.

JOHN

But to compartmentalize that hard. I believe it.

DANA DEVITO

You.

JOHN

You can't hide it.

KEY TAKEAWAY

“There is no shortcut through having a tough and emotionally painful conversation.”

08 CLOSING

DANA DEVITO

Yeah. I appreciate that. That is a very important thing to recognize as you go into a necessity like that. And I appreciate the hardship that was. So thanks for sharing that with me. Yeah. Yeah. John, I just want to say thanks so much for your time today. Thanks for sitting down with me. We're going to be reviewing a couple more candidates, but again, I appreciate your time, and I'll be getting back to you before the end of the week, so. So thank you so much.

JOHN

I appreciate your time.