Dominic Rawson ’90
Managing Director and Vice President / R&M International Sales Corporation

Dominic Rawson ’90 became an entrepreneur in college when he launched his own painting company. Rawson was confident that he could run his own business and make a higher wage if he went out on his own. That early experience confirmed for him that he wanted a career in business, specifically in sales. Little did he realize however, that he would travel the world after college for textile companies before coming home to join the family business.

Today, Rawson is managing director and vice president of R&M International Sales Corp., the company his father founded in 1977. Rawson is responsible for sales, purchasing and new business development. Headquartered in Pennsylvania, R&M is a trusted supplier of high-tenacity yarns, both textiles and plastic, to 40 countries on five continents. The company specializes in importing, exporting and trading raw materials. An active recycler for decades, R&M is also committed to helping producers and mills locate and develop new markets for their excess materials.

“When I graduated from high school I wanted to go to a small Catholic college in New England that was near the mountains,” Rawson said. “I missed skiing. I was born in Italy, in Biello, an hour from Turin in the foothills of the Alps. We moved to the U.S. when I was 11. My dad wanted us to grow up in an English-speaking country. We grew up in Pennsylvania.”

After visiting several colleges, Rawson was drawn to Assumption. “Assumption offered a nice campus and a sense of community,” he said. “That decided it for me. I knew it was a place I could learn, play soccer and have fun. The faith-based education I got helped to reinforce the values I was raised with.”

Rawson changed his major from business to English after discovering that accounting and finance were not his strong suit. He knew he wanted a career in international trade, given his interest in travel and other cultures.

“I had an English professor who gave me a strong appreciation for literature, reading and writing,” Rawson said. “My management professor, Herbert Bromberg, was very influential in teaching me about marketing and consequences in business.”

Rawson counts Father John Franck, A.A. ’70, who was then a dean, as a source of wisdom and guidance during his undergraduate years. Fr. Franck is now assistant general of the Assumptionists in Rome.

“He was an incredible inspiration and guide for me,” Rawson said. “He took me under his spiritual wing. I still keep in touch and have visited him in Rome. He has been very influential in my career and in my life.”

After graduation, Rawson went to work for a wool merchant in Boston for three years. Just as he and his father were about to start a wool business together, the younger Rawson was made an offer he could not refuse.

“I was approached by a multinational company that had factories all over the world where they washed and combed wool,” he said. “I was hired in 1993, and six months later, they sent me around the world to learn the business by visiting their factories and wool growing countries. My focus was in wools and the by-products of wool. I started in New Zealand, then went to Australia, followed by Hong Kong and China.”

Rawson continued his around-the-world journey through Europe. He met and married his wife, Caroline, in France. They have four children, who range in age from seven to 13. When he returned to the U.S. in 1998, he realized that the wool industry was on the wane. He turned down an opportunity to become president of Standard Wool.

“Instead, I went to work as an independent agent for them and for R&M, my father’s company,” he said. “My father asked me to join the family firm full time in 2000.”

He’s never looked back.

“Working in the family business is exciting and challenging,” Rawson said. “It was great to work with my dad and my brother, Pete, until he retired. My sister, Elena, joined the company in 2006. In my role I have to keep the entrepreneurial spirit in the business because we deal with first-quality products, as well as secondary or recyclable materials. Balancing those two businesses is challenging. My dad, who is 80 and still active in the company, has always been entrepreneurial and open-minded. He has let me make mistakes. Most importantly, he let me try.”

Rawson is an equal partner in the company with his sister. They continually seek new lines of business.

Rawson offers this advice to young would-be entrepreneurs: “Look inside yourself to find what really drives you,” he said. “Take this passion and direct it to a field where you can get paid for it. You have to be willing to take a job or an internship that will take you part way there. In business, people are willing to help you if you’re honest and you work hard. The only way to fail is not to try.”

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Family Matters

By Elizabeth Walker