

Off The Grid And On The Clock

Tom Lewand: A master of strategy and competition.

INTERVIEWED BY SUSAN KEHOE, PH.D.
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TOM LEWAND is a dyed-in-the-wool favorite son of the state of Michigan. He was born in Southfield, went to school at Royal Oak Shrine and has three degrees from University of Michigan, including an MBA and law degree. An authentic Michigander, he enjoys going Up North with his wife, Suzanne, and four daughters to his cottage on Lake Huron at Port Sanilac where they enjoy kayaking, jet skiing and paddle boarding.

They are also a family of readers, and he has read many children's books aloud to his girls when they were growing up. Now he and his oldest daughter read some of the same books, mostly American historical non-fiction like David McCullough's book *1776*, while comparing notes along the way.

Many people think they know everything about Lewand based on his former, very visible executive positions with the Detroit Lions. Indeed, he is a popular public figure, but *SEEN* discovered other facets about the man who is taking over as CEO of Shinola Detroit Inc.

What brought you to Shinola?

I love the Shinola story. They came to Detroit to create hi-quality manufacturing jobs when the city was just starting to come back in 2011. They put people to work when they needed jobs. Shinola offered me a unique opportunity to stay in the community instead of moving outstate. It also allows me to contribute to networks, similar to what I participated in for the Super Bowl in 2006, and when we brought the Final Four to Detroit in 2009. I've lived here all my life and it's an important personal objective to be a part of Detroit's renaissance.

You've been a master of strategy and competition your entire career. How does that experience relate to the retail marketplace?

All businesses are about a group of people with a vision they want to execute. Talents and specializations may be different, but both Shinola and the Lions have a paramount concern for the customers or fans. Both realize financial success from the people who buy the products or attend the games. Customer-facing organizational principles are key to each organization.

How diversified are Shinola products going to become?

Our next new product launch is into the world of audio, which meets the growing interest in vinyl and albums. For example, we're planning a limited edition of high-end turntables that are audiophile quality, state of the art and built in Detroit. Around the holiday season, we'll launch a line of jewelry with designer Pamela Love. Leather has really taken off, so in 2017 we'll unveil a line of women's luxury bags in various colors, styles and price points. We're also releasing new watch styles for both men and women to meet expanding demand.



Is there a public corporation on the horizon or do you intend to remain privately held?

The essence of the mission is to build the business and sell more in order to create more jobs in high-quality American manufacturing. The evolution of the company's ownership remains to be seen, but we intend to be competitive and successful.

With 16 stores around the world, will Detroit remain the mecca for the corporate headquarters?

Detroit is part of Shinola's DNA. We appreciate the reception from the community and celebrate the evolution of workers who have become artisans. Moving is not part of the vision.

What are your plans for continued involvement with Detroit's renaissance?

We want to be part of the community we live in. Some of our community efforts include adopting families, becoming mentors in schools and integrating with the College of Creative Studies in the Argonaut Building.

What's your favorite Shinola watch?

I actually own three of them. I originally purchased the signature Runwell, which was the first style produced in 2013. My favorite is the Black Blizzard titanium watch with a large dial. The Canfield is a thinner, dressy casual watch that I bought my oldest daughter this year for high school graduation.

Tell me something people don't know about you?

That I'm boring. My wife and the girls mean everything to me. I don't overschedule activities because I want a good balance between work and family. I don't need much else — material things just don't matter. **NS**