

Entrepreneur Profile:

TOM TAYLOR

RÉSUMÉ

Name: Tom Taylor.

Title: Partner, with Maurice Lombardo.

Company: Taylor Lombardo Architects LLP.

HQ: San Francisco.

2004: \$2 million.

Number of employees: 14.

Year founded: 2000.

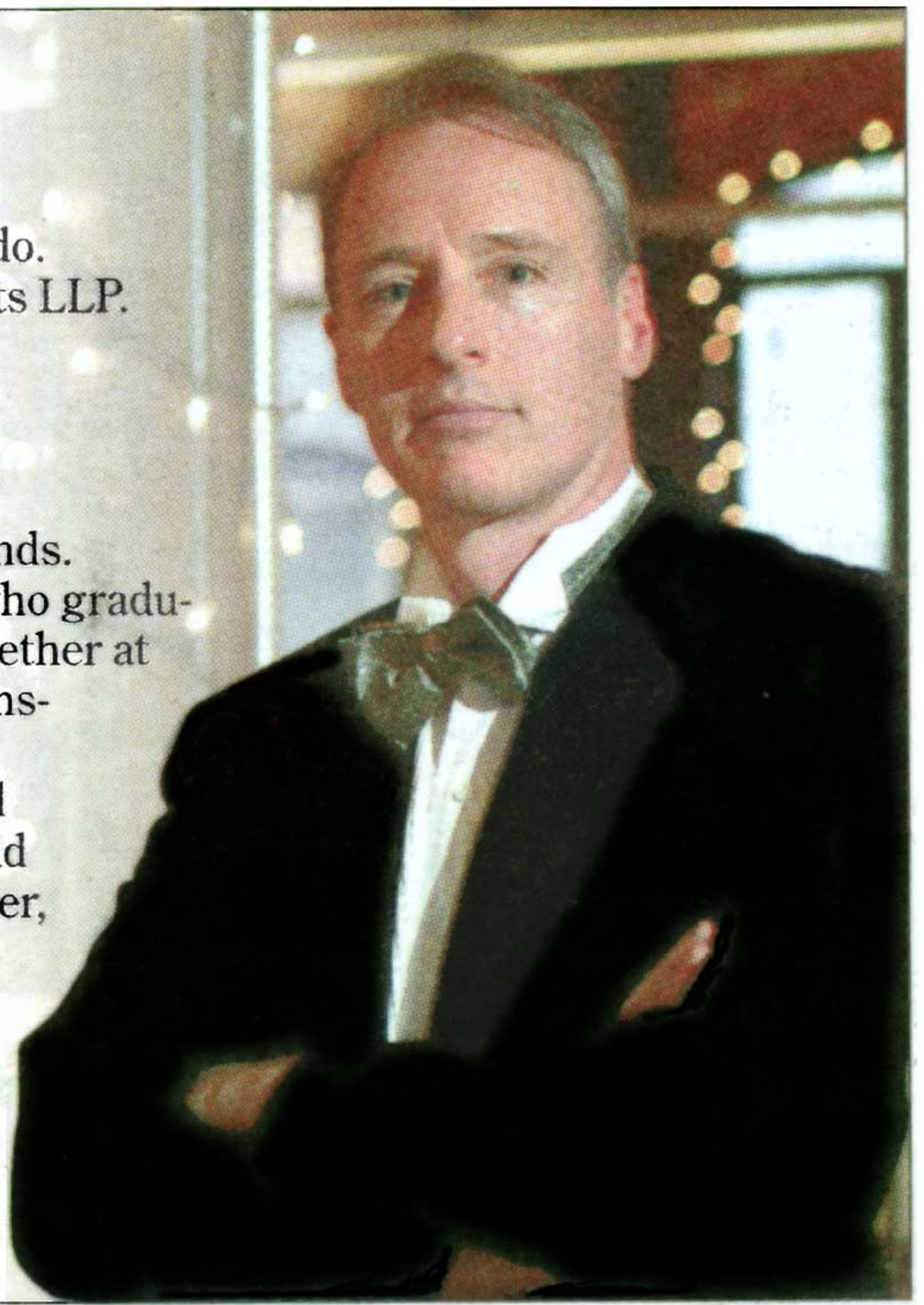
Source of startup capital: Personal funds.

Background: Taylor and Lombardo, who graduated from Pratt Institute, worked together at Sandy Babcock Architects. They transferred to Brandenburger Associates Architects, and were employees until 2000, when they became partners and the firm was re-named Brandenburger, Taylor Lombardo. The duo officially went on their own in 2004.

Age: 49.

Residence: San Rafael.

Website: www.taylorlombardo.com



BIG PICTURE

Reason for starting business: We wanted to have more design control, we wanted to be the primary contact with clients. We have more direct control with projects.

Most difficult part of decision: Developing a client base. Financial security issues; we both own homes and have mortgages.

Biggest plus of ownership: The opportunity to design very prestigious projects to take on more challenging projects. We also take on projects that don't bring us a lot of revenue but are worthwhile investments in the future or for an extremely good cause, like the Napa Valley farmworker housing project and the model for migrant farmworker housing in San Cristobal.

Biggest drawback: Cash flow and pressure.

Biggest misconception: It's easy and you can make own hours. The clients make your hours.

Biggest business strength: Communicating with clients. Maurice does the marketing and business development. He is the primary business mover and shaker for the office.

Biggest business weakness: Being too easygoing.

Biggest risk: This building (that we bought). Spending more money than we needed to create a place to work.

Biggest mistake: Not getting into our own partnership sooner.

Smartest move: Hiring great people, and the building we bought, and our Napa property. We got an SBA loan with Capital Access Group, from Jackie Jordan, that gave us an incentive to buy our own building with little money down.

Biggest worry: Maintaining the workload in tough times. Quality control — we have to be extremely careful. It only takes one mistake to ruin 1,000 good decisions. Also, there are so many variables, including agencies to deal with. It's unpredictable.

Top source of inspiration: Opportunity to do great design.

DAILY ROUTINE

Most challenging task: Taking the tremendous inspirations clients bring to us, and trying to make that into a building that can be built with the budget and code and

approval restraints. Every year it seems that clients become more knowledgeable and have higher expectations. But it has to meet some type of budget, too.

Favorite task: The initial concept for a project, taking the raw ideas and turning them into something visual.

Least favorite task: Dealing with the local governments on building submittals.

Biggest frustration: So many projects that start off with all this gusto and get held up for some reason. There is all this activity and then it drops off to nothing. There are infinite number of reasons for a stall, but it's usually being held up by agencies. So we have to have more work than we can do.

Source of support in a business crisis: We rely upon everyone here.

DREAMS

Key goal yet to achieve: Establish new markets in other areas. We're working on establishing in Hawaii. We're working on a project in Shanghai, China.

First move with capital windfall: Pay off debt.

Five-year plan: We don't want to grow. We'd like to keep the same size but streamline the processes to do a better job and continue to consistently pick excellent projects to work on.

Inducement to sell: I'd have some sort of architecture business no matter what. We're not even thinking about retiring for a long time.

First choice for new career or venture: Pro golfer or skier.

PERSONALS

Most admired entrepreneur: Bill Gates.

Most interested meeting: Jimmy Carter.

Stress reducers: Happy hour, exercise and competing in sports.

Favorite pastimes: Softball, skiing, being with family, playing with my kids.

Favorite book: The ones I read to my young kids. I love the "Minnie and Moo" series.

Favorite film: Dr. Strangelove.

Favorite restaurant: Wine Country restaurants, specifically in Napa County.

Favorite destination: The mountains, I go skiing for a week every year in Colorado.

Automobile: Mercedes silver CL320.

— Lauren Pederson ■