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## Journal Profile: Mitch Jacobson, co-director, ATI



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Anyone who knows [Mitch Jacobson](#) would find it hard to believe he was a shy child. He credits a move his family made from Philadelphia to Clearwater, Fla., during junior high school that forced him to come out of his shell in order to make friends. That gregarious nature, coupled with a love for managing people and building things, has led him down an adventurous career path to the Clean Energy Incubator within the Austin Technology Incubator at the University of Texas.

Early in his 30-year career, Jacobson was drawn to the computer industry, starting off at Tandy Corp. He left to join Dell Inc. in 1989 after seven years with Tandy, and says a highlight of his career was helping the now global personal computer giant expand into Europe between 1991-1993.

Living in France, Jacobson opened more than 10 offices in several countries including Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Poland and Italy.

But by 1996, the lure of a new management challenge led Jacobson back to Florida with Tech Data Corp. That move turned out to be fortuitous in other ways. While in Florida, he adopted one of his daughters and was able to spend time with his father during the final few years of his life.

Why did you move back to Austin? I was ready to do something out of the computer business and start my own company, Eyes of Texas Partners. We had a 3-year-old daughter and a son on the way and wanted to raise the kids back in Austin. And we had a great deal of friends in Austin that we had left and wanted to get back to this great city.

Why did you leave Eyes of Texas Partners Investment Group for ATI? I was ready to get into something beyond investing and get my hands dirty. I love what I do today — it's just so broad and gets me involved in so many things.

Personally, what's the biggest thing to happen in your life in the past year? My daughter Hailey is having an incredible senior year at The Khabele School and was accepted into the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandise in Los Angeles starting later this year.

How did your experience living abroad while working for Dell International affect you? I learned how the rest of the world lives. In the U.S., we live in a cocoon in some ways.

What inspires you? I am inspired every day as I work with graduate and undergraduate students from UT and other young professionals in Austin who are passionate about becoming involved with difficult issues, learning all that they can and to make a difference for themselves and our community and beyond. I am also incredibly inspired to make Austin and Central Texas the "Clean Energy Capital" of the world.

What's your strongest character trait? I think I'm a good listener and open to all.

In the business world, what could you be better at? Managing upward.

What's the best business lesson you learned the hard way? Become an expert in what you are investing your money into.

If you could hire one of America's greatest business leaders, who would it be, and why? At



Nick Simonite/ABJ

Mitch Jacobson, co-director, ATI Clean Energy Incubator

this time, I'd have to say Elon Musk or [Richard Branson](#). They both have a vision of greatness for the planet, not just for themselves or their companies.

Your favorite quote?"Experience is one thing you can't get for nothing." — [Oscar Wilde](#)

What's been your biggest challenge in life? Being married three times. This is the last, for sure.

What do you do in your spare time? Mostly my son's football and basketball teams that I used to coach when he was younger. Love to play golf, but don't play as much as I use to.

Do you have any collections? I have a pretty incredible political button collection that goes back to elections from the early 1900s. My aunt started collecting many years ago and I got the bug for some reason. Along with my brother, sister and mother, we collect every four years and keep an eye out at garage sales, auctions and elsewhere.

Your favorite Austin hangout? Vespaio.

Favorite weekend getaway? My house.

What's something others may not know about you? I never finished my MBA. I have a fraternal twin who lives in Atlanta who is my absolute best friend. I also have a total of six brothers and sisters — a melded family — who are extremely close although we live across the U.S.

Patricia Rogers is the Austin Business Journal's research director, responsible for compiling information in the ABJ Book of Lists.

