

# Business

IN GREATER GAINESVILLE

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# ITPRO.TV

THE NEW, FRIENDLY FACES OF IT

BY JACKIE SMITH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN SLOAN



**THE ITProTV TEAM, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:** Wes Bryan, Ronnie Wong, Peter VanRysdam, Titus Rush, Dustin Segers, Meagan Bentley, Don Pezet, Erin McCaffrey, Angie Byers, Denise Broom, Renee Bryan, Vivian Pezet, Daniel Lowrie, Cherokee Boose, Rob Magary, Brandon Mize, Tim Broom, Peyton Agdamag, Mike Rodrick, Phillip Ford, Thomas Meadows, Nate Copeland and Taylor Austin. *Not pictured: Peter Weishaar, Shelley Rummel and Cameron Gera.*

## “Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline.”

- JIM COLLINS

If you walk straight from the entrance to the newly renovated, 28,000-square-foot building that houses IITProTV, past the strikingly modern reception area and Opus Coffee, you’ll find yourself in a hallway plastered with hundreds of quotes.

With advice ranging from the likes of thought leader Simon Sinek to Jedi Master Yoda, the “Wall of Inspiration” is full of hand-picked wisdom collected by IITProTV co-founder and CEO Tim Broom since well before the information technology training company was founded in October 2013.

“In 2010, I was introduced to Simon Sinek, and his ‘Start With Why’ really resonated with me. I would say it changed my life and perception,” said Broom, who worked for decades in other industries before making the choice nearly 16 years ago to change careers to IT. “Selfishly I wanted [the wall] because I wanted to be able to walk by and be inspired by those thoughts again. If you read this stuff every day and you’re immersed in it, you live it.”

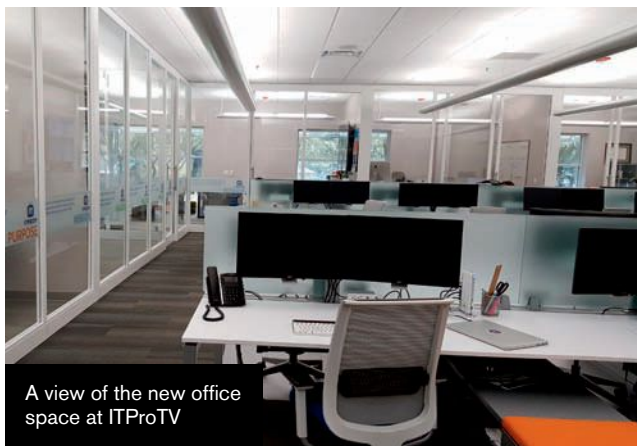
Equal to his passion for spreading IT knowledge on an individual level is Broom’s drive to inspire those around him, especially the 30 staff members at IITProTV. From flying the team to Las Vegas, Nevada, to participate in Zappos’ culture training to reading Jim Collins’ “Good to Great” as a group, Broom and co-founder Don Pezet work hard to equip the team with novel ideas that benefit them both as individuals and IITProTV employees.

“‘Good to Great’ really resonated with the team,” Pezet said. “Any company can create a lot of content and it can be good, but not necessarily great. So we’d rather specialize in a particular area of technology [at IITProTV] and make it great.”

This strategy has paid off, as the IT training company has grown to more than 50,000 users in over 125 countries in just over three years. Several prestigious institutions, notably Harvard, NASA and the U.S. Supreme Court, have also reached out directly to secure bulk memberships for their staff, Broom said. To reach an even wider audience, IITProTV recently partnered with Wiley, the award-winning publisher known largely for its “For Dummies” series, to produce video content for Wiley’s Sybex brand of IT administration and certification exam prep offerings.

New course content is live-streamed daily and made available on-demand for members within 48 hours, adding to the company’s already expansive course library. On a yearly, monthly, or sometimes hourly basis (in the case of network security), the field of IT is growing and evolving, which requires IT professionals to update their skill-set at an equal rate, explained Pezet. The courses are developed specifically to help members keep their skills, certifications and industry knowledge relevant, with topic areas including CompTIA, Cisco and Microsoft to Security and Cloud Fundamentals. “We have a saying around the office, ‘A good IT person is always learning.’ The IT industry changes so fast,” Pezet said. “It’s a great career to be in, but be prepared to hit the ground running — and stay running — and you can have a lot of fun.”





A view of the new office space at IITProTV

**“For, in the end, it is impossible to have a great life unless it is a meaningful life. And it is very difficult to have a meaningful life without meaningful work.”**

- JIM COLLINS

The transfer of knowledge in the most efficient and entertaining way possible is a major factor in determining the show format at IITProTV. Each 30-minute lesson features one of six IITProTV hosts and a Subject Matter Expert, or SME (pronounced “smee”). The rotating panel of SMEs, contracted instructors who are well-known in their respective field, fill-in as needed to give members the best instruction available. “We don’t try to know everything,” Broom said. “It’s not possible, so we bring in experts from the outside.”

The casual, conversational tone between the host and SME is part of what members love most about learning from IITProTV. “Just by nature, we’ve found it’s easier for people to listen to,” said Pezet, who works as one of the company’s six hosts in addition to his role as CTO. “As host, I don’t have to read a script or teleprompter — you get the freedom to communicate how you feel is appropriate.”

Members are encouraged to interact with the instructors throughout the show using a live chat, which the host pulls questions from. There’s also a Q&A forum where members can seek additional help, which the hosts often personally respond to. “People can make more of a connection when they can actually see and talk to the people that they’re seeking support from. That’s really the big thing, you’ve got to be accessible,” said host Wes Bryan, a former restaurant manager who changed careers after taking courses at New Horizons, the brick-and-mortar authorized training center where many of the team, including the co-founders, worked before joining IITProTV.

Every instructional video is transcribed and made searchable via the web or on the IITProTV site, so members can quickly reference content without having to remember exactly where they heard it. Clicking on a phrase in the transcription starts the video from exactly that point. Members who buy a Premium Annual Membership are given the ability to download DRM-free versions of the videos for offline learning. There’s also a mobile app, and the ability to stream videos on-demand via Apple TV, Roku or Amazon Fire TV. Beyond video content, IITProTV also offers vLabs, or virtual labs, and Transcender practice exams for certification tests.

“We’re always looking for ways to create a better experience for our members and still keep it affordable, keep it approachable, and make [the experience] where somebody who knows nothing in IT can jump right in and feel at home, and somebody who’s an expert can jump in and there’s content for them too,” Pezet said.

Broom still personally crafts the emails announcing changes to IITProTV’s 50,000-plus members, and every response to those emails is sent to his inbox. Broom welcomes the feedback, and uses it to influence IITProTV’s content creation. Broom even personally knows of the select members that frequent the site’s chat rooms on a daily basis, one of whom is legally blind and helps troubleshoot accessibility issues on the site, helping to make it fully accessible. A few of these power members were invited to the company’s grand opening party in October, with full travel and accommodations paid for by IITProTV.

“We get to thank them personally for helping us and always participating,” he said. “For them it’s like a dream come true, and for us — there probably won’t be a dry eye in the house. We feel like we know these guys. It’s awesome to have the opportunity to do those kinds of things for people.”

Ensuring members feel fully supported at all stages of the learning process is important, Broom said, and he is quick to correct anyone who refers to their members using other terms. “We feel like we have a relationship with our members,” he explained, “And this is a membership — this is not a subscriber, this is not a customer — this is a membership. We’re in this together. Chances are you came to IITProTV to learn one thing, but stayed because there’s so much more here,” he said, adding that the renewal rate is around 84 percent. As membership grows, I think it gets harder to keep that feeling, but we’re doing everything we can to constantly, as we jokingly say, “Touch our members every day.”

As IITProTV celebrated its third birthday in October 2016, there were 26 members who had been with the service since month 1, and each one received a personal phone call from Broom or Pezet. “Don and I sat here and we called every one of them,” Broom said. The best part about the experience was that the members felt as if they personally knew the pair, especially from watching Pezet on-screen in his hosting role. “They’d say things like ‘Wow! Is it really you?’ which I think is funny because we’re just a couple of guys in Alachua County,” Broom said with a laugh.



# THE HOSTS

Business Magazine decided to test the logic of ITProTV's hosts with the question:

**“If you could be given one super power, which one would you choose?”**



**RONNIE WONG**

**Super power:** Ability to heal others. *“The problem is – there’s a difference, right, between a super power and a gift to do something. A super power is an innate ability to do something that’s beyond what we have. For me, it would be to be able to heal people. To be able to help somebody that’s in need, in that sense. I’d love to be able to do that. Or super brains. Not to be a genius, but to be able to use that to help people.”*



**MIKE RODRICK**

**Super power:** Future sight. *“The ability to see into the future, to see where technology is going to be next week. That would really help me as an instructor, to be ahead of the game there!”*



**DANIEL LOWRIE**

**Super power:** Invisibility. *“I can bypass all sorts of physical security; the motion sensors wouldn’t even notice me...”*



**DON PEZET**

**Super power:** Stopping time. *“If there’s one problem I have, it’s that there’s only 24 hours in a day, and there’s always more to be done.”*



**CHEROKEE BOOSE**

**Super power:** Mind control. *Boose laughed loudly, followed by “That’s the best one, right?”*



**WES BRYAN**

**Super power:** Invisibility. *“If you’re invisible, you can pretty much do whatever you want, regardless of the super powers you have.”*



ITProTV co-founders  
Tim Broom and Don Pezet

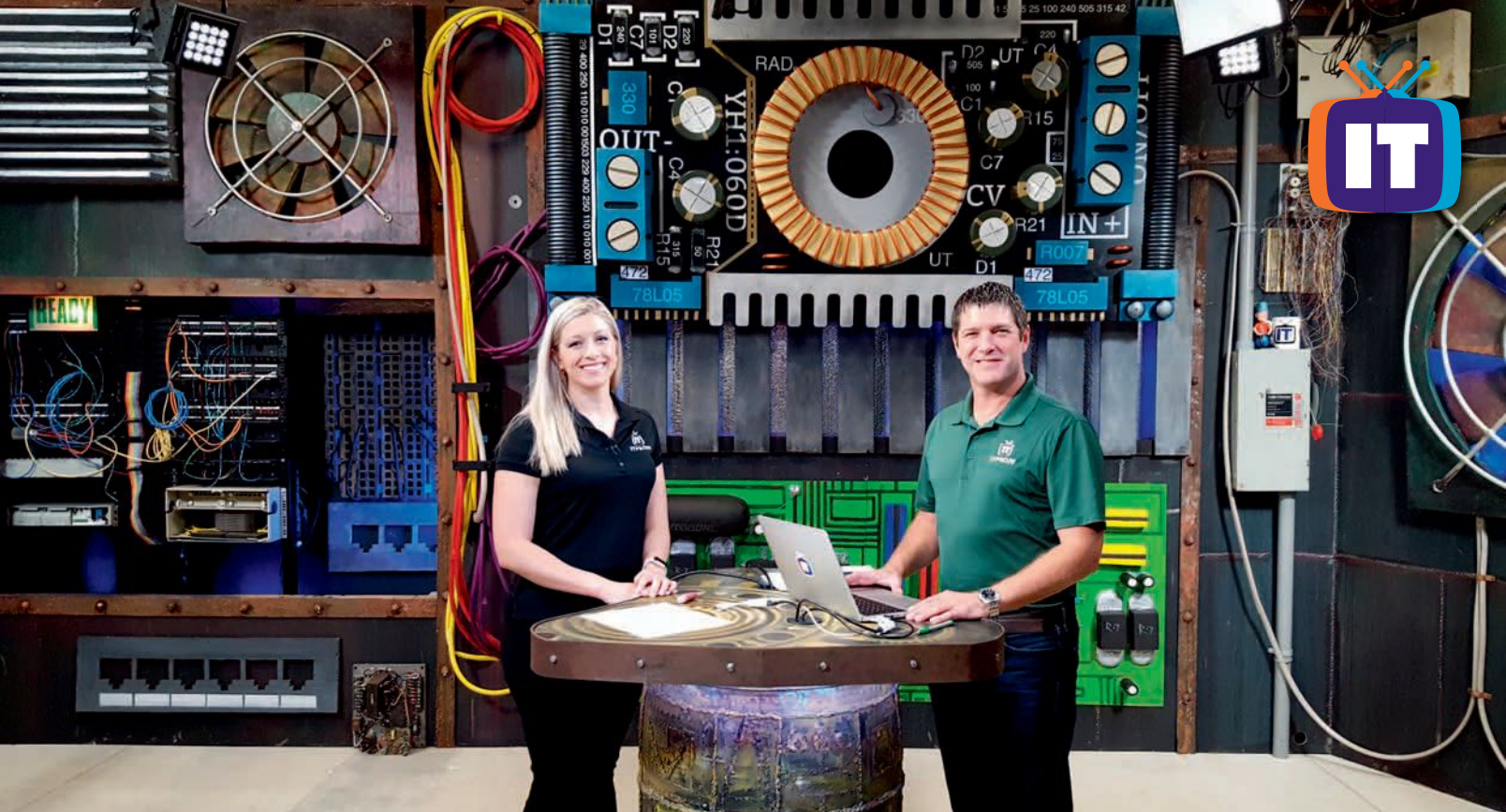
## “Great vision without great people is irrelevant.”

- JIM COLLINS

According to host Ronnie Wong, there are two passions every one of the six ITProTV hosts have in common: the desire to be great at IT and the desire to share information in the most helpful way for others to learn. “We’re always pushing ourselves to create better content and to present the best possible show that we can every day,” he said. “All of the hosts here like to help people. We all share that common goal — when we see somebody struggling, we try to help them. It’s not a matter of making the ‘big bucks.’ Overall, I think we share the sense that with ITProTV we’ve been able to help more people start their career on a successful path and make the process enjoyable.” Most of the hosts at ITProTV have worked together for eight to fifteen years as instructors, and the tight-knit nature of their relationships helps to create even better content, Pezet said. “Everybody kind of has their own area that they prefer, and it’s pretty neat because there might be a topic that I

absolutely hate that someone else absolutely loves. Because we’ve known each other for so long, we kind of know what each person prefers and can make sure they’re doing things that they’re passionate about. That’s important because if you’re not passionate about something, then you’re going to create content that’s just mediocre, and that’s definitely not something we want.”

The decision to hire a new host is not one Broom makes lightly, only recently adding a new host for the first time since the company was founded. Like everyone else, the sixth host and newest addition, Cherokee Boose, started her IT career as a New Horizons student. In an industry dominated 85 percent by males, it’s important to shine a light on talented female professionals like Boose, Broom said. “We support women in tech, we always want to support that,” he said. “It’s great to have someone like her who can talk tech as good as any of the guys.” The first day Boose was on the job, Broom heard from a teacher about how the female host’s presence inspired the girls in his class. “The girls were saying, ‘I want to be like that,’” he recalled. “To be able to be a positive example for women in tech — that’s awesome.”



## Do you want to create professional videos?

ITProTV is the flagship channel of the EdutainmentLIVE network, which was developed to provide educational content to viewers

- Access to five multi-purpose studios
- High quality production technology and equipment
- Includes our full service, highly trained production staff
- Post production editing capabilities
- Custom production packs available



Contact Tim Broom at [Tim@ITPro.TV](mailto:Tim@ITPro.TV) or (352) 600-6908 for inquiries



For Boose, being the only female host at ITProTV isn't a big deal, because she's treated the same as everyone else. "I don't feel like it's a huge difference. I know that in general in the IT field there are many struggles that women face, but thankfully that's evolving. I'm excited to be part of a platform that encourages everyone to enjoy IT."

Through the company's live on-air chats, Q&A forum and even the office design, Broom's goal is to make the hosts as accessible as possible to members and the IT community at large. "Our members form a connection with our hosts [through these channels]," he said. "The new facility was built to invite the public in," he explained, citing features like the public coffee shop in the lobby and the glass-walled studios. "Our intent is for people to come in, have a cup of coffee, maybe see the wall of inspiration and feel inspired, and look through the glass to see what we do. And if you want to meet somebody, come on in! We'd love to meet you. It's a little different than some other businesses."

## "A company should limit its growth based on its ability to attract enough of the right people."

- JIM COLLINS

Broom purposefully sought like-minded tenants for the rest of the new building, located in the Tower Hill office park across Tower Road. "We call it Tower Technology Park," he said, adding that he wants to create a technology hub on the west side of Gainesville to expand options for Alachua County residents beyond the downtown area. "Having a place to invite other technology-based businesses to share experiences and resources and create content together is a major goal of mine," Broom said.

So far New Horizons and Gainesville Dev Academy have also made the building their headquarters, and plan to collaborate with ITProTV on future projects.

The decision to expand to five studios — up from one in the old office — was part of Broom's plan to collaborate with local business who have a need to create informational videos, although he admits the decision was also partly a gut feeling. "Sometimes you're just driven to pursue a dream," he said, noting that the company has already received bookings from a large local franchise and from elsewhere in Florida.

As for the future, the team at ITProTV plans to continue spreading quality IT content in an accessible, entertaining format. "Whether you choose us or someone else, just make

sure you're getting quality," said host Bryan. "If I could tell the community one thing, it would be to just try us out and see what you like. We care about the quality. We care about our members. We want to empower our members through engaging learning, it is our purpose."

Despite earning over \$10 million over the first three years in business, Broom stays humble about the role he plays in people's lives and still seeks to reach as many people as possible. "I'm always thinking 'Can we help more people around the world who are trying to find an effective way to learn?' How can we provide educational resources to more people for less than what they can pay elsewhere? Because time, money and quality of instruction are always the biggest obstacles," he said.

Overcoming those obstacles can be life-changing. Many of the staff, including Broom, are career-changers who bettered their lives through learning IT, which means they relate especially to others on the same path. "I love what we do," he said.

When people thank Broom for reaching their goals, "I always respond to them, 'You can't thank me; I thank you, because we get to do what we love every day. Every one of us. And without you, we wouldn't be able to do that. We are so grateful for you choosing ITProTV and sticking with us.'" **B**

## ITProTV: BY THE NUMBERS

- 3 years the company has been in business (since October 2013)
- \$10,000,000+ company earnings in first three years
- 55,000 ITProTV members as of December 2016
- 125+ countries where members live
- 20+ videos the company can produce per day
- 30 employees at ITProTV
- 5 studios in which to create content