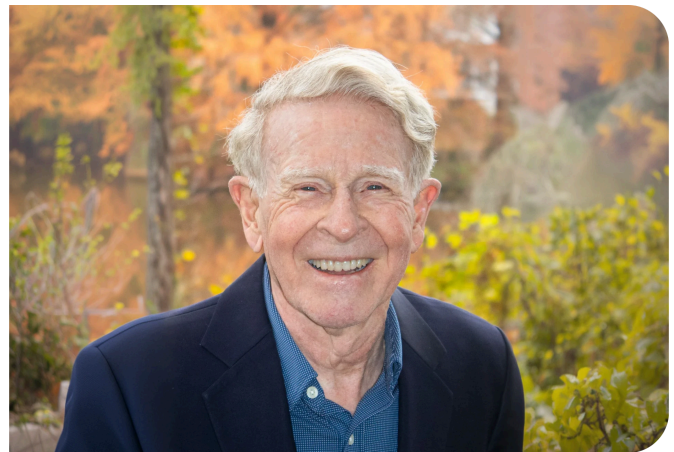


Terry Conway: The Indiana Jones of the Seafood Business

People You Should Know

By **Tony D'Urso** September 10, 2026



“Business, as you know, is chaos all the time.”

After more than five decades in business, Terry Conway knows something about chaos.

Markets change. Regulations appear. Competitors catch up. Costs rise. New technologies arrive. And every day brings another problem demanding a leader’s attention.

Terry’s answer is surprisingly simple: Don’t let the noise make you lose sight of what matters.

I recently spoke with Terry on The Tony D'Urso Show at TonyDurso.com/podcast. He spent ten years as CFO of Perdue Farms before leaving a successful career to buy a small seafood company. It had one primary product, limited distribution and just one telephone line.

His friends thought he had “rocks in his head.”

Terry saw an opportunity.

He improved the product, modernized production, increased capacity and hit the road to make sales. One major innovation cut the time required to freeze the company's soft-shell crabs from about 20 hours to just 38 minutes, dramatically improving quality.

Then Terry began looking around the world for new sources and markets.

That led to some unusual adventures. He remembers waking up with chickens in the hallway, finding a scorpion in his luggage and listening to geckos chattering on the ceiling. At one point, he earned the nickname “Indiana Jones of the seafood business.”

But international growth also taught him humility.

Rather than arrive in another country assuming he knew how things should be done, Terry learned to ask questions – about the culture, traditions and ways of doing business. Listen first. Learn. Then adapt.

And sometimes, even careful entrepreneurs get it wrong.

Terry invested in an operation in Borneo only to discover something he hadn't adequately tested: the local subspecies of crab wouldn't molt in captivity. It was an expensive mistake that reinforced another principle he carried forward – be thorough and test your assumptions before making the big investment.

But underneath all these lessons is something even more important.

Trust.

While working in Asia, someone suggested Terry could make more money by mixing inferior seafood with the premium product. Nobody would know the difference.

Terry refused.

“We lose our trust, we lose our brand.”

Customers eventually know when standards slip. They know when quality changes. And once their trust is gone, winning it back can be much harder than earning a few extra dollars was worth.

Terry built his company around three continuing priorities: improve the product, process it competitively, and use marketing to generate leads and close deals.

Today, his company operates across seven countries. But perhaps the most interesting part of Terry's story is what he was trying to build from the beginning.

Not a company to sell.

A company to last.

“From day one, longevity was going to be the issue.”

He wanted a multigenerational family business, so decisions had to work for the long haul rather than simply make the next quarter look better.

That idea seems particularly useful today.

With so much competing for our attention, perhaps the answer isn’t doing more. Perhaps it’s knowing what deserves our attention – and what we refuse to compromise.

Terry spent decades building something designed to endure.

Maybe the question for the rest of us is simpler:

What are we building today that we still want to matter tomorrow?