

Richard Mourdock, as you may recall, is the Tea Party candidate who defeated Richard Lugar to win the Republican Senate nomination in Indiana. In the course of researching Mourdock's positions, I took a look at his career to see how that may have helped shape his views. In doing so, I ran into a bit of a puzzle.

Mourdock is a former oil company geologist and coal company executive. But his most recent job before running for public office is a bit mysterious. I found at least fifty websites that say "Mourdock founded a successful environmental consulting business" - often in exactly those words - but not one that gave the name of the company or said anything about its activities. A great many sites also followed wikipedia by adding that the firm provided "various services to numerous clients." But no one provides any details, not even the name of the firm. There is a strange gap in public information.

I've heard that Mourdock worked primarily for fossil fuel companies, especially coal companies in the context of coal settling ponds and potential fine coal extraction, as well as slurry assessments. But I haven't seen anything in writing about this.

There's also the question of the identity of the "successful consulting firm" that he founded. Some sleuthing by my fellow blogger, Rhead Enion, revealed a Mourdock connection with Sub-Tech Environmental Services. It's hard to find much information about Sub-Tech or its activities, but one of the officers was Tom Gabe. According to the website of Gabe's current company, [Heritage Petroleum](#), in 1989 Gabe formed Subsurface Technology (Sub-Tech), an environmental services and emergency spill response company servicing 33 states across the country; it was acquired by Koester Companies, Inc. in 1994. It's unclear what roles Gabe and Mourdock played in the operation of Sub-Tech, or how Sub-Tech related to the separately incorporated Sub-Tech Environmental Services. Gabe and Mourdock are both prominent supporters of international missionary work, so that may have been their initial contact.

Another Sub-Tech officer, Eric B. Dodd, was the founder of [Summit Civil Services](#), which seems to specialize in site preparation and hazardous waste issues. The relationships between Sub-Tech, Sub-Tech Environmental Services, and Summit are murky.

Finally, I also [discovered](#) that Mourdock owns a commercial photography business called TI-Images, though that seems less relevant. That business doesn't seem to be mentioned on his website.

I'm not saying that there's anything shady or unethical here. Still, the gap in the public record is odd. You would expect to have a clearer public portrait of the career of a major party candidate for the Senate. It's almost as if the only information on the web was that Romney worked for a financial services firm, without giving Bain's name or saying anything about its activities.