

Spotlight on Small Business

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Name: Brian Frederick

Name of business: Joseph Frederick & Sons

Age: 48

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Brian Frederick says the key to his success has been knowing the business as well as the trade.

Education: Delcastle Technical High School and Evangel College

Family: Wife, Gail, and two daughters, Melissa and Alexis

Brief description of business: Family-owned air conditioning, heating, plumbing and electrical service and sales business

Location of business: 810 Stanton Rd., Stanton

Number of employees: 40

Date business opened: 1947

Annual sales: \$4 million

How did you get started?

When I was 15, I started working at my grandfather's business while majoring in the sheet metal fabrication trade at Delcastle High School.

Who or what has been your biggest source of inspiration and why?

My father instilled in me a strong work ethic and a sense of value of trade expertise. My brother Robbie and I still lean on those values every day as we run the business.

Who is your typical customer?

People call us when they need us -- and usually it's when they need us now -- for repairs or to replace old equipment.

What is the toughest business decision you have had to make?

In 1999, Robbie and I agreed to partner with a utility company headquartered in Atlanta. That was the toughest decision. In 2003 we severed that partnership and bought the business back, and that was the best decision I've ever made.

What are your business goals for the short term? Long term?

What makes Joseph Frederick & Sons unique is that we continuously educate and update our employees, send them on professional development programs, and encourage them to expand their skills. This helps our customers receive service from the most knowledgeable and up-to-date tradespeople. For the long term, we want to maintain the family-held business and the business ethics my father and grandfather instilled in us.

What is the biggest challenge facing your business? Your industry?

As a business and as an industry, we are always challenged to grow while maintaining a highly skilled body of employees. Technology changes rapidly, and it's crucial that we are continuously updating and educating our employees and ourselves.

What has been the key to your success?

When I took over the business, I had to make an important transition to become a businessman. Many contractors are excellent plumbers or electricians, but their businesses don't operate efficiently because they remain focused on their trade skills rather than developing their business skills.

How do you expect to succeed in the future?

We'll celebrate our 60th anniversary next year, and if we can keep pace with the industry standards and keep educating our employees, I expect we'll be around for at least 60 more years.

What advice do you have for someone who wants to start a business?

Knowing the business is as important as knowing the trade.



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