

Continuity and the Family Business

By Richard Simpson, OD, JP, CWD

I am sure you will agree that owning a business is a challenge not for the faint-hearted. At times it's as though you are a juggler in a circus act, using income from one project to help finance the next.

Starting a well drilling business is tough. The initial investment in machinery and tools are so high that most entrepreneurs in the industry start their business with used equipment which are often in need of repairs. Often times it feels as though there are so many things working against you, if you are not contending with faulty equipment, unrealistic deadlines and customers who don't pay on time, you have to deal with the unrelenting monthly obligations of bills and the anxiety of meeting your next payroll. These are the struggles of owning your own business, it's not all a bed of roses but when things go right the rewards are gratifying.

Yet with all these obstacles we remain committed, resolved to keep on doing what we love. We are well drillers, and by God, we are going to get the job done, on time and to the satisfaction of all no matter what it takes.

But what happens when you are in a highly competitive environment where your competitors keep driving down prices, making your very existence much more challenging.

It has been my experience that it is not always about price, developing a reputation for excellent work is equally, if not more important. Our repeat customer base is high and this is what has kept us in business for the past 50 years. This is true for all aspects of our business including pump sales, installation and servicing. We try not to get caught-up in the price wars, as we believe we offer our customers great value for their money.

Seventeen years ago, we saw our industry changing, we asked ourselves what does the future hold. Our question was answered while attending the National Ground Water Association's 2003 Ground Water Expo in Orlando, Florida.

We were thrilled to learn of the advancements in water well drilling. We discovered that we could replace our slow, yet reliable, percussion drill rigs with the perfection

of dual-rotary and down the hole hammer technology, the latest in our industry. But could we really afford to purchase these new machines? The cost was enormous, "Many Monies" as my colleagues would say, but the real question was, could we afford not to? So, with literally leveraging the Company into enormous debt, we decided to invest in this new technology with the hopes of revolutionizing our local industry. We considered it an investment in our future. Today we are convinced we made the right decision. It was a gamble, but one in the right direction.

Without doing an official survey, I can comfortably say, most of us small entrepreneurs, have no real pension not to mention an adequate health care plan. Our dreams of one day retiring comfortably are often in jeopardy. After all, most of what we earn is reinvested in the company. It's a constant struggle of maintaining this and upgrading that.

As the second generation in a family of well drillers, I have had the tremendous opportunity to be involved with the growth and diversification of our Company and the industry in general.

As the proud father of two, Alicia and Adam, I have exposed them to various aspects of the family business while they were growing up. This included helping them to realize their full potential by choosing subjects in school geared around the family business. Today, Alicia holds a Business Administration Degree from the University of Technology and a Master's Degree in Human Resources from York University and is our Human Resources Manager. Adam is a researcher and Lecturer at University of Southern California with a Chemical Engineer Degree from Carnegie Mellon; a Master's Degree and PhD from Stanford University in Civil and Environmental Studies. Although it is early days yet, it is my dream that one day they both will take their rightful place in the Company and continue the legacy and become the third generation of well drillers and Nation builders. What is also important is continuity and succession planning. I have been told, that when your customers see that your Company is not just a "One Man Show" they will feel more at ease with doing business with you. I am supported greatly by my wife Shereen who plays her part as our Company Secretary.

Jamaica Wells & Services Ltd. and our companion Company, Talawah Investments Ltd. are comprised of a

group of well trained and professional individuals. I am well supported by my General Manager, Operations, and Office Administrators and by extension, my Well Drillers and Pump Service Technicians. All dedicated at providing the best service at the best price.

Richard Simpson is the Managing Director of Jamaica Wells & Services Ltd. and Talawah Investments Ltd. In 2017 he was conferred the honour of the Order of Distinction in the Rank of Officer (OD) in recognition of his contribution in the Groundwater Well Industry. Richard is a Justice of the Peace for St. Andrew and a gazetted mediator with many Resident Magistrate cases successfully mediated. He is also the Nations only certified well driller with certification from the National Ground Water Association in the U.S.A.