

EXECUTIVE PROFILE: Robert Allen

For the owner of a successful roofing company, Robert Allen has a very unique background.

Allen grew up in the business with his father and mentor Don, who owned the original Allen Brothers roofing business. But Robert Allen initially decided to take a different track – to become a missionary.

But after graduating, his life as so often happens took an unexpected turn.

“I came back from college, met my wife and fell in love,” said Allen. “We wanted to start a family and I knew I had to earn a living and roofing is what I knew so I took over the business.”

Located in Rochester Hills, Allen Brothers, Inc. is a family-owned commercial and residential roofing contractor in its 55th year of business. The firm services virtually all types of roof systems from standard to state-of-the-art, high-end projects.

Recently Allen Brothers has completed projects in downtown Rochester’s new luxurious Royal Park Hotel, the YMCA of Oakland County and the Cranbrook House, a structure featured on the Home and Garden cable television network as one of 12 most notable historical restoration sites in summer 2004.

“We give customers exceptional roofing services that will help protect and enhance the value of their property,” said Allen.

But Allen’s company also gives something else - it gives back to the community.

“That’s part of my background (in missionary work) coming through,” he said. “It’s good for our business, our employees enjoy it and we are helping the community.”

Recently Allen Brothers donated parts and labor to a low-income family in Macomb County that needed a new roof for its home. Those are the types of



projects that Allen feels help build a reputation within a community.

Allen also holds a ministry role in his family’s church, Christ the King in Oxford, and counts his ministry work as one of the most important features of his life, along with his family, friends and the company.

Allen believes in personal service, which helps him compete in today’s competitive roofing industry. Each proposal submitted by Allen Brothers includes the expected completion time, technicians required for the job and specific materials that will be used. Allen feels it is critical to accurately estimate what a job will entail and cost ahead of time because it provides a competitive advantage when compared with some of his competitors.

But it’s the company’s employees that Allen feels helps set it apart from competitors. All 55-60 of Allen Brothers’ employees are carefully selected and in essence join a second family when they come to work for the company.

“For me to be successful it is important to be able to delegate responsibilities to skilled people I trust and I have been fortunate enough to find those people,” said Allen.

Of course it should come as no surprise that a trained missionary works well with others.

“I’m truly a grateful person for everything life has given me,” said Allen.

Education

B.A. in Missionary Sciences, Redeemer Missionary Training College in Phoenix, Ariz.; continuing education classes were taken at Arizona State University.

Family

Wife Nicole and 3 children; ranging from 15-21 years old

Residence

Oakland Township

INSIGHTS

Purpose?

To remain the best contractor in Southeastern Michigan providing the highest quality works in the industry. I have little interest in being the biggest or most profitable roofing contractor.

Essential business philosophy?

We strive for the highest quality in everything that we do. We provide whatever our customers need, even if we last worked on their home or building a decade ago.

Best way to keep competitive?

Attract and retain skilled employees who are good people. Continue with community-service work and donate to local causes.

Yardstick of success?

To be the first and only call our customers make when they have a roofing need.

Goal yet to be achieved?

Retire with dignity and have his employees retire with dignity. I

want my name and reputation to be impeccable.

JUDGMENT CALLS

Best business decision?

A few years ago, Allen broke the company into five separate departments under the Allen Brothers, Inc name. Each department functions as its own business with separate department heads, accounting departments, managers, etc.

Worst business decision?

Taking on a couple of jobs that financially resulted in a loss.

Who is your mentor?

Don Allen, Robert’s father who started the company.

CONFESSIONS

Like best about the job?

The freedom it gives me to live with the ability to set my own hours and schedule allowing me to spend more time with family and on my interests.

Like least about the job?

The pressure that comes with this job. Roofing is a very high-pressure business because nothing else matters to a customer more than getting a roof built or fixed.

What keeps you up at night?

Jobs piling up simultaneously and the fear that customers’ needs are not being met.

Most important lesson learned?

Never set goals that are unrealistic or that stretch yourself too thin because it will hurt your business in the end. It is critical to feel comfortable delegating responsibilities to people whom you trust.