

EAGA Business Builder

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Today's speaker was Dale Armstrong—TLC Plumbing



Mr. Armstrong was born in Quemado, New Mexico. He is the youngest in a family of two boys and two girls. Dale appreciates the benefits growing up in a community that promoted family values, personal relationships and neighborly camaraderie. In the rural parts of New Mexico, the families are all friends and everyone would do anything, anytime, to help one another. That life was interrupted for a time during Dale's high school years when, sadly, his parents were killed in a car wreck. He was sent to Farmington to be with relatives, and finished his senior year there. Then he went on to attend San Juan College. In those days, it was a branch of NMSU and the intent was to get a two year degree at San Juan before moving to Las Cruces to finish a four year degree at the state's most prestigious university (Dale may have not used those exact words, but the intent was to finish a four year degree at NMSU). In order to work his way through school, Dale took a job with a plumbing company in Farmington. He worked 20 hours a week, and attended school full time. A busy life, but Mr. Armstrong still had time to meet the love of his life. He and Gail were married in 1984. Dale graduated from the two year college, but the family values he had learned while growing up were very important. He knew that committing to a marriage included additional commitments to properly care for his wife. Family became the most important thing, so Mr. Armstrong decided it was best to keep on working and not continue with the final two years at NMSU. The plumbing work was good, and interesting, and beneficial. After a short time, the Armstrongs moved to Albuquerque where Dale opened his own plumbing business. Naturally he named it Armstrong Plumbing. At some point, Dale was advised that it may not be best to have the company named after him—in case he wanted to later sell the business, but didn't want to worry about complications/reputation with someone else using his name. There happened to be another business that was liquidating all of its plumbing supplies. Dale offered to buy all of the parts, if he could have the company name too. So that is how Armstrong Plumbing became TLC Plumbing. Over the few years that have passed since 1984, the Armstrong family has grown rather substantially. Gail and Dale have four children; three daughters and one son. Those youngsters have also increased their own branches on the family tree to now include eleven (soon to be twelve) grandchildren. As we've already noted, family is important to Dale. When he first moved to Albuquerque, they lived in the Heritage East part of town. They had a nice house and probably nice neighbors (never really got to know many of them). The atmosphere in the city was just about opposite of what Dale had enjoyed during his growing up years in Quemado. In Albuquerque, the houses were quite close, but the friendly relationships were quite distant (if they existed at all). In the rural community, the families lived far apart, but the relationship were very close. To Dale and Gail, the latter was much better for raising a family - so they moved to Magdalena. Dale still owned and operated TLC, but he was wise enough to set up a great management team to help. That was important for the business, but was also very important to Dale personally. He still worked hard at the company, but let everyone know that he would not be at the shop on Fridays. Out where they lived, the schools operated on a four day week and Dale made sure that his Fridays and weekends were available for him to be in Magdalena working with the family and attending athletic or other events with the kids. His children acquired a great work ethic, learned how to develop good relationships and experienced the positive impact that people can have on one another. Mr. Armstrong also carries those basic fundamentals into his business operations as well. All the employees of TLC are expected to adhere to five core values directed by the company: Honesty; Respect; Hard Work; Compassion; and Consistency. Management and employee relationships operate within those core values every day. Likewise, employees are expected to operate within those core values when providing services to customers. TLC has developed a positive reputation throughout the state. The business has grown to \$118 million in annual revenue, and the staff has grown to over 600 employees. It has not always been smooth sailing though. When Dale's long-time operations manager retired, Dale chose as a replacement, someone that he knew well and felt had all the appropriate qualifications. Dale made a mistake. The new manager did not interact well with employees, and his management style was actually detrimental to the overall operation of the company. In a very short time, the core values became lost and the culture within the company changed in a negative way. The impact was substantial, and all aspects of the operation suffered. After three months that manager was replaced, but it has taken about three years for the harm to be undone. Dale says that "There is always a good thing that can come from a bad thing". Lessons learned have brought about an even better TLC. Mr. Armstrong credits the TLC recovery to his new 'Right-Hand-Man', Eddie Padilla. Eddie has been able to regain the prior positive culture and direct the company back to operating completely within its five core values. And speaking of positive core values...if Dale could have his way, he would instill some of those in our state's operational philosophies. Part of his discussion this morning centered around his concerns that our state is failing its residents in very many ways. A large percentage of our citizens exist on Medicaid and Medicare. For long term assistance, that sort of 'help' is, most often, a hinderance to developing the individual's self respect and feeling of worth; and it easily snowballs into a generational thing. Our state's current culture does not encourage business growth or development either. As a matter of fact, it appears that the 'powers-that-be' are quite content to not change anything. Dale continues his efforts to encourage productive change though, but the negative environment has existed for so long that apathy on the part of business owners and residents alike has become one of the major roadblocks to any transformation. If New Mexico is going to improve, people have to begin to work for that change. If you would like to discuss any of this morning's presentation with Dale, you can give him a call at 505-269-6097. If you just want to schedule some plumbing work, you can call the office number 505-761-9696 (even though Dale is always willing to help EAGA members with any of that too). Mr. Armstrong is also available to discuss all the interesting details, about the other irons that he has in the fire. Like TLC Santa Fe (a separate operation from TLC Albuquerque); Pro-Fab Inc (a 25 year old, \$4.5 million revenue; 25 employee; design and manufacturing operation); and Montosa Ranch, LLC (a working ranch on 32,000 acres of owned land and 200 acres of leased land near Magdalen). But be aware, any discussions about "irons in the fire" has a whole other meaning when you are talking about the ranch.

Leads & Business Information:

None noted this week

Reciprocity:

None written down or emailed in this week. Hopefully some Five Star Google ratings have been submitted though.

- ◆ Board Members please note: There will be a board meeting will be right after breakfast this coming Tuesday, February 8th.
- ◆ Second announcement for a prospective new member:
Rebel Road Hot Rod Garage
Representative: Jason Cody Rockwell
Category: Vintage automotive / motorcycle restoration company
Sponsor: Scott Peck
- ◆ First announcement for a prospective new member:
Sierra Peaks Corp
Representative: John Rockwell
Category: Manufacturing
Sponsor: Michael Caldwell

If you have an objection to either of these businesses becoming a member, or if you have information that you feel should be considered during the review process, please contact our Membership Committee Chairman, Jack Zipper (jdzipper@comcast.net or via phone at 505-259-5959) as soon as possible.

Badge Board Greeters

Feb 8 th	Philip Menicucci—Paramount Custom Cabinets
Feb 15 th	Hass Aslami—Pizza 9 Franchise System
Feb 22 nd	John Woods—Phocus Real Estate
Mar 1 st	Frank McCallister—Color New Mexico
Mar 8 th	Lance Darnell—Darnel Cable & Fasteners
Mar 15 th	Rich Rosley—A-TECH Security
Mar 22 nd	
Mar 29 th	

Upcoming Speakers

Feb 8 th	Guest Speaker—District Attorney, Raul Torrez
Feb 15 th	Kit Turpen—Berger Briggs Insurance
Feb 22 nd	Gary Sanchez—The Why Institute
Mar 1 st	Nestor Romero—Payroll Company
Mar 8 th	Larry Sonntag—New Mexico Business Coalition
Mar 15 th	Mark Abramson—Los Ranchos Gun Shop
Mar 22 nd	Paul Jew—Moji Studio
Mar 29 th	Damian Pascetti—Pascetti Steel

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