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Living by the Golden Rule

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VERNON — Having worked for years in the hospitality industry, I believe there are three main ingredients that give a business owner “one-upmanship” over a competitor. The first and most important is customer service. Second is a quality product, and third, hiring and retaining quality employees.

All three of these ingredients are evident at Continuous Rain Gutter Systems & Show Low Garage Doors.

With a storefront on Highway 61 in Vernon, not far past Stanford General Store at the “Y, this company is only going to keep growing. Though they are in the sustainability business with one segment of their company, their real sustainability comes from constantly searching for, and delivering, the very best products to their customers, listening to what the customer really needs, and empowering their employees to know and understand that you worked hard for the money you are spending with them.

Daniel Kipp and his wife, Laurie, own the company, and they reside in Vernon. Dan is originally from upstate New York. His Dad was with the United Dairyman of New York and his mom was in real estate. The family moved to Arizona and Dan went to high school in Tempe and later to Mesa Community College.

Living by the Golden Rule

Daniel and Laurie Kipp, owners of Continuous Rain Gutter Stems and Show Low Garage Doors, are proud of their business. They recognize that homeowners may save for several years just to be able to buy their products. They want them to be totally satisfied with their experience with them. The Kipps recognize that their employees are their most important asset. The believe valuing their employees has helped build their successful business because without them they could not give customers the service they want.

Kipp learned customer service at an early age, answering the phone for his mom’s real estate business. “It taught me to be polite,” he said.

After high school, Kipp went to Mesa Community College. He got married young and took a job with a garage door company in 1978 in Phoenix, always thinking he would go back to school.

Now, with over 25 years experience in the business, he doesn’t need to. He could teach it.



“With the traffic and heat in the Valley, we started coming up on the weekends, and then eventually we moved up. I started my own business in Pinetop. I was 23 then,” Kipp said. “Back then there were no traffic lights up here, just stop signs.”

When Kipp told the Phoenix garage company he

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worked for about his plans to start his own business in Pinetop, the owner told him he would help him, and even sell to him wholesale.

“That was 1982,” Kipp said, “and I stayed until 1990. I did garage doors and gutters.”

In 1990 he and his first wife started a family and moved back to the Valley. “There is always opportunity in the Valley if you have to do it.”

They had two daughters together and later divorced.

“We moved back to the mountain in 1998 and I started working out of my house in Vernon. I had made a lot of contacts from when I did the business in Pinetop.”

In 2005 Kipp came upon his current location. It was a good place for his trucks and materials and it had an office front. Some thought this location might not be a great place for business. It is in Apache County and has all the necessary room for the water storage tanks and water harvesting systems. In fact, as visitors enter the gate to the business, they are amazed at the variety of systems available, and the wide variety and types of systems available.

“This location is like the center of the wagon wheel for Concho, Show Low, Snowflake, Taylor, Pinetop, Lakeside and Holbrook. We also do work in Payson, Springerville, Flagstaff, Sedona and Prescott.”

Right now the company has about a hundred jobs going on. “We get a lot of referrals, and we work all over the state.”

Another partner is the White Mountain Apache Tribe. “That was a good opportunity for us, branching out. Years ago we started at Fort Apache Timber Company. Now we always do stuff with the tribe. We have always had a good relationship with them. We have a years permit and we employ their people when we work there. We also do Navajo and Hopi work.”

Kipp also started subcontracting with Home Depot when they came to town and then Lowe’s.

The company stresses good quality work. “We do such a high volume, we do not want to have people fall through the cracks. We try to take care of everybody and be efficient. We reminded the employees that many of our customers save for years to be able to pay for our product up front. We want them to get their money’s worth.”

Kipp is now married to Laurie, the numbers person in the business. They have been married since 2012.

Laurie reminded Dan to be sure and remember the employees in the interview. “My wife said, ‘Without employees to do the good work, we are nothing,’” Kipp said.

“We can sell the product all day long, but if we do not do what we are supposed to do with installation, we are nothing.

Trevor Haroldson is Kipp’s right hand. A local guy, he grew up in Snowflake. He came to the company in 2001 through DES.

Haroldson had been working in the Valley and moved back to the mountain. Haroldson does garage door installs and management. He does all the scheduling.

“I like working at this company because it allows me to spend time with his family. I just like the people and the customers. Dan is good to work for,” Haroldson said.

On the water storage tanks and rain harvesting end of the business, David Brown is Kipp’s main man.

“David was a great find,” Kipp said. “Trevor went to do an estimate on David’s in-laws’ house and met David, who was home on leave from the U.S. Army. Brown’s father-in-law asked, ‘Do you have a job for him? He will do anything. He says, ‘Yes, sir, and ‘No sir.’”

“I didn’t know anything about water tanks or rain water harvesting. I had no experience, but I learned about the conservation of water. Dan gave me a chance,” Brown said.

Brown did learn. He now does all of the preparedness fairs and estimates in the office. Having been in the army as a recruiter, he also enjoys working with people.

“I like it here,” Brown said. “There is an opportunity to grow, and no way for me to go but up.”

Brown is already involved in the community. He is a captain with the Arizona Rangers.



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Today's Poll

The Round Valley Dome has closed due to water damage. Should the district make fixing it a priority?

- Definitely, it's a unique venue for many sports and non-sports events.
- No, there are other more important projects that should come first.
- I don't know.

Kipp says the lead guys do the work. Paul Spenlove is his lead installer and in addition to Spenlove, there are seven other installers. Kipp is proud that he has long-term people that have stayed with him, and he believes in hiring vets.

Just as Laurie wanted to be sure everyone knew how important the employees are to their business, the company shows them with more than just lip-service and a paycheck. They have an annual company picnic for the employees and their families. This year it was at Fool Hollow. The employees get vacations and Christmas and Thanksgiving as paid days off, a major benefit for a small business on the mountain.

What is the future of Continuous Rain Gutter Systems and Show Low Garage Doors? "Controlled and careful growth," Kipp said.

Kipp's right hand, Trevor Haroldson, will be the man in the driver's seat when Kipp is ready to retire.

Kipp said balancing work and home is important. "I am happy with the way I live. I enjoy the White Mountains."

He is at the office all day and Laurie comes in later in the day to do the books and paperwork. She finishes checking things after everyone else has gone for the day. She prefers that schedule.

A few years ago Laurie found out she has rheumatoid arthritis. Kipp said she takes the morning as her time and devotes it to her 15 Neuban goats and other projects on their 10-acre ranch, only six miles from their business.

Laurie taught herself to milk the goats, and she also has chickens and loves their fresh eggs. They also have horses and five dogs at their ranch. The dogs are Queenslands, a Jack Russell and a pug. The pug actually goes horsebacking riding with them. For a city girl who grew up in Rhode Island and lived in Mesa and Scottsdale, Laurie has truly gone country.

After her time at home in the mornings, Laurie loves working at their business and the public it serves.

After work, to get that balance he requires, Kipp and Laurie take a walk in the evening. They try not to talk business. It is a way to avoid burnout.

They also have 80 acres at Woodland Valley Ranch, east of St. Johns. It is the place they use as an experiment for things in their business, learning by trial and error. It is also just a place to "get away."

"You can really see the beauty everywhere up there," Kipp said.

They also love to spend time with their five grandkids and get away two weeks every year to Alaska. Kipp said they even met some people from Heber-Overgaard who volunteer at a museum on one of their Alaska trips. They like fishing and sight-seeing when they go.

"We Would like to travel more, but I married young and with working all your life, you focus on making ends meet. Travel is on the back burner," Kipp said, "but it is there."

Dan and Laurie Kipp are making a difference in the White Mountains. The combination of garage doors and rain gutters, water storage tanks and rain harvesting has given them a successful business much needed on the mountain. Their business employs local people and put dollars into the White Mountain economy.

Dan and Laurie are truly "Movers & Shapers." They have their priorities placed where they belong, both in business and their personal lives.

Good people want to treat people the way they want to be treated. It is the Golden Rule in action.

Reach the reporter at bbruce@wmicentral.com

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