

Entrepreneurial Spotlight

Loyd Builders is owned by Josh Walker. We sat down with him to learn more about his business. He told us that Loyd Builders began in 1959. Walker stated, “while I can’t take credit for the founding, I can tell you it’s founder Allen Loyd, and previous Owners Sonny Burch and Jerry Thompson, were all people that I have looked up to in my career. All are proud Franklin Countians who made giving back to our community a key part of their business approach. We strive to carry on that tradition they started.”

Josh Walker grew up in Ottawa, KS. He and his family as well as his parents still live in Ottawa. Josh began with Loyd Builders with a minority stake in the business in 2007 and then took full ownership in 2011. Loyd Builders employs 24 people currently. They work on \$10,000-to-36-million-dollar commercial projects. Loyd Builders builds healthcare facilities, schools, higher education buildings such as community college and university buildings, retail, senior living facilities and more. They do NOT build residential, or civil-type construction. Josh also said, “these days, they have the luxury of choosing projects within 2 hours of Ottawa.” Loyd Builders is also involved in design and pre-construction projects.

In Wellsville alone, Loyd Builders has worked with Wellsville Health and Rehab to build their assisted living complex. Currently, they are working on the Wellsville City Library addition and making all the bond improvements to USD #289. In the past, they have also worked on the Simplot facility in multiple ways and built the Central Fiber plant.

We asked Josh what his key driving force was to become an entrepreneur. He told us, “I always knew I wanted to work in construction like my dad (Sam Walker). He’s worked more than 40 years as a superintendent for Loyd Builders and still works here. After I graduated from Pittsburg State, I went to work as a project manager for one of the largest construction firms in Kansas City. I gained a lot of great experience there, building Crown Center Square and some other notable projects. But the driving force for me in owning my own company was that I always knew I wanted to come home to Franklin County, and I wanted the opportunity to “build better.” By that I mean, I wanted to build projects in partnership with the community and the owners – where it wasn’t just a job or something to put in a portfolio, but a relationship where they could have direct contact with the owner of the company and would know that their project mattered to us.”

We moved our conversation on to how Loyd Builders had built such a successful customer base. Josh replied, “through integrity. I think by doing the right things and treating people with respect, we’ve built our customer base through word of mouth. Over 90% of our business comes from repeat customers – schools, colleges, manufacturers, hospitals, cities, and counties who have worked with us before and want to work with us again when they have another project.”

Marketing a business can take lots of strategy and can be quite expensive. As for Loyd Builders’ strategy, Walker told us which tactics have been the most successful for them. “We do some social media and website marketing. Word of mouth and referrals from our clients and subcontractors who have worked with us before are a big part of what we do.”

To be successful, a business needs to have a positive culture which makes people feel valued and “part of something.” We asked Josh about the culture at Loyd Builders. He told us, “I’d say we have a culture of honesty. In the construction business, challenges come up every day – whether it’s running into

asbestos in a building or finding unsuitable soils on a site. So we've created an environment where our team isn't afraid to bring bad news to the table and ask tough questions. Bad news early is better than bad news later. When bad news comes, we take it for what it is and figure out a solution. I think that's continually benefited our clients because there are no surprises - we're upfront with what we find, and we come to them with solutions instead of problems. This type of culture has benefited our team as well because they know they can draw on each other's expertise and tackle solutions together. So much of what we do is collaborative. The more people involved in a decision and/or solution, the more minds we can draw upon. Communication is key.

Being an entrepreneur can be all-encompassing and can affect your free time. We talked to Walker about how owning and running Loyd Builders has impacted his family. Here is what he offered, "Owning a business doesn't stop at 5 p.m. every day and my family understands that. But one of the reasons I wanted to come home to run a business and raise my family in Franklin County is because it has afforded me the opportunity to do the work I love and still make it to dance recitals and football games." Josh Walker has been married to his wife Kim for 21 years. Kim is a stay-at-home mom and they have two children - a son who will be a sophomore in high school and a 7th grade daughter. It is important to Josh to be home each evening with his family.

When asked what motivates him, Josh stated, "seeing how our work impacts the communities we serve and our own families. To think that a hospital we built will literally save people's lives, or that a school we had a hand in will teach kids who will one day become the next business owners and teachers and nurses for our town. That's a feeling that never gets old."

"When I first bought Loyd Builders, I would have defined success as keeping the doors open and not letting the founders of the company down. Today, I would say success is being able to grow the company like we have - building major projects not only in Franklin County but in Topeka, Johnson County, Iola, Chanute, and all over the state - while still staying true to who we are and still having that one-on-one relationship with our clients," Walker said in response to the question about his definition of success.

Most entrepreneurs believe there is some sort of pattern or formula they have followed to become a successful entrepreneur. As we discussed this topic, Josh said, "I think there are many paths to success, but some of the key ingredients are to always operate with integrity and honesty, and not be afraid of hard work and long hours." Key activities also play a part in how entrepreneurs spend their time. He mentioned, "I think community involvement is critical - not just for the business relationships that can come from that, but also the personal relationships and mentorships you can find from like-minded people who care about our community. For me, local Chamber memberships, United Way, Franklin County Development Council (FCDC) and being a part of our community's economic development efforts have been particularly valuable."

For a fun question, we asked Josh who has been his greatest inspiration. He didn't hesitate to say, "My dad is at the top of the list. He is a meticulous carpenter and a meticulous superintendent on the jobsite. I learned from him that it pays off to do things right the first time, and that anything worth doing is worth doing right. I started working for my dad and now he works for me!"

As we wrapped up the interview, we asked Josh what is the part of your life experience you would alter if you had the chance to? He told us, "I can't say that I would alter much. I know I'm fortunate to have

been able to build the company and the career I wanted, and to be able to do it right here in my hometown where Kim and I can raise our kids near our family and friends.”

If you'd like to learn more about Loyd Builders, you can visit their website at <https://www.loydbuildsbetter.com/> or stop by at 2126 S. Elm Street in Ottawa. You can also call 785-242-1213 between 8AM and 4:30PM Monday through Friday.

