



ROOFING'S MVP

By Emphasizing Team, South Florida's Best Roofing Keeps Winning

By Andrew Dietderich

DALLAS, Texas — Roofing contractors across North America might try to tackle every day like a big game, but RC's 2018 Commercial Roofing Contractor of the Year — Best Roofing — takes it to a whole new level.

From its team buses taken to every jobsite, its "Jake" dog mascot and Best Roofing University to its regular "Huddle" meetings and annual "Breakfast of Champions," the company is all about team and

going above and beyond to take care of its own.

Proof?

As 2017's Hurricane Irma approached, the Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.-based company invited workers with no place to go to ride out the storm in its main building, designed to withstand a Category 5 hurricane. For three days, more than 100 workers and their families stayed safe, were provided plenty of food and other necessities and even



➤ **LEFT:** The leadership team at Best Roofing. (From left) Dale Eby, vice president and CFO; Alexandra LaBarr, vice president of brand management; Zack Wallick, senior vice president; Gregg Wallick, president and CEO; Ian Wallick, senior construction manager; and Leo Rossi, vice president/pre-construction. **ABOVE:** The Best Roofing team reacts to being named *RC's* 2018 Commercial Roofing Contractor of the Year. Photos by Tony Miranda.

played games, said Zack Wallick, senior vice president.

“We like to say that we have 340 extended family members,” he said of the company’s employees. “It created community, loyalty and just showed (employees) we’re here for you, and we’re here for each other because without each other we wouldn’t be able to accomplish the things that we accomplish together.”

Atop the list of accomplishments is a high level of quality customer service that yields steadily growing revenue. Best Roofing reported \$47.5 million in 2017 (No. 30 on *RC's* Top 100 Roofing Contractors list), up from \$37.2 million the previous year and \$32 million in 2015.

Now, the company can also add *RC's* 2018 Commercial Contractor of the Year to its list of accomplishments.

“I’m really honored to accept this award on behalf of all the people at Best Roofing,” said Gregg Wallick, president and CEO, upon accepting the award at *RC's* annual Best of Success conference last September in Frisco, Texas. “We have about 340 people today and they’re really just awesome people.”

Wallick spent most of his speech crediting others with the company’s success — and advised contractors to take a similar approach.

“What I’ve realized here lately are things are just moving fast, I mean everything is moving fast,” Wallick said of the roofing industry. “Product changes are fast. Codes are changing. Technology is changing. Tools are changing. Everything is changing faster than it ever did.

“I just don’t want us as an industry to forget the importance of human capital,” Wallick said. “Every one of our companies, every one of our organizations are families, and they need to stay run like families. It’s a close business...roofing truly is a team sport. Everybody’s got to play their position and it doesn’t just happen with one person.”

A Career Kickoff

From its locations in Ft. Lauderdale and Miami, Best Roofing serves southern Florida’s commercial, industrial, and multi-family housing community on roof repairs, restoration and replacement.

About 95 percent of the company’s business is commercial.

The company was founded in 1978 by Paul and Sandy Palmer.

Gregg Wallick, 63, kicked off his career in roofing that same year when he went to work for his father’s company, General Roofing Services. Wallick had just earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in business administration from the University of Miami, where he was captain of the football team.

“The two biggest things that my dad did for me was he taught me how to golf, and he taught me how to roof,” Wallick said during his acceptance speech.

By 1987, Wallick had worked his way up to become president and CEO of General Roofing Services, where he remained until he bought Best Roofing in 2001 from a hedge fund manager (the Palmers had sold it in 1996).

Best Roofing was “in big trouble financially” and Wallick set out to essentially stop the bleeding and rebuild.

It started with revamping the company’s culture that had transformed into what Wallick described as a state of confusion and disappointment. Over the next three years, every former employee was replaced, every department re-engineered.

The newly established culture drew primarily from another part of his life in which Wallick had success — sports.

“I’ve been in team sports my whole life and I think back to when I first started in learning how to compete, and how important practice is, and preparation,” he explained. “I take a lot of those concepts and incorporate them into what we do from a business perspective.”

Similar to sports teams that experience success, Wallick insisted on a high level of communication and instilled the notion that each employee should master the fundamentals of his/her job.

Concurrently, Best Roofing changed its primary market, switching from being primarily a new construction contractor — what Wallick calls “bid and beg” — into a consultative roof replacement and service providing contractor.

With the right culture and new team members in place, Best Roofing reflected Wallick’s vision and began to grow.

Game Plan

Gregg Wallick knows that Best Roofing would not have the kind of success it has without its employees. He spent much of his acceptance speech talking about Best Roofing’s “team,” and how they rise to the occasion.

“It’s such a labor intense business,” he said. “Without teams, without crews, without crew management, without operations management, project management, service management — without people that really understand the trade, you’re going to get in trouble.”

Like it did when Hurricane Irma hit, the company invests heavily in its people with hopes to create a culture whereby Best Roofing is where they want to build a career, as opposed to simply having a job.

“We’re so different than all of our competitors,” Wallick said. “We’re open, we’re looking for everybody to be engaged and we have fun.”

In early 2018, for instance, Best Roofing celebrated its 40-year anniversary with a barbecue and blue grass party. The Best Roofing

> COMMERCIAL ROOFING CONTRACTOR OF THE YEAR



> *Roofing Contractor* Publisher Jill Bloom hands the 2018 Commercial Roofing Contractor of the Year trophy to Gregg Wallick, president and CEO, Best Roofing.

warehouse was transformed from parking garage to “Wild Wild West.”

Each year, the company has “The Breakfast of Champions” during which the office staff cooks breakfast for the field staff. Additionally, every worker from the field is given a new pair of safety boots.

The company holds a quarterly meeting in each of its branches called “The Huddle,” which serves as a kind of pep rally to recognize accomplishments and look ahead to the next quarter.

Taking the sports-based approach further, crews travel to each jobsite in a custom orange and black Best Roofing bus — much the same way sports teams travel.

But a team can't succeed without a game plan, and that's where one of the company's biggest investments comes into play. Best Roofing University is an online-based offering designed to keep employees informed and up-to-date, as well as helping company officials understand the level of preparedness in terms of potential advancement for each employee.

The program offers 12 trade trained courses each quarter for field teams and is clearly outlined for each job at the company.

Further, Best Roofing University also includes “The 31 Steps to a Construction Project,” or what the company considers essential to complete a successful construction project. All new employees must take each of the 31 modules that start at proposal request.

With such investments in its employees, the company also takes plenty of steps to ensure they stay safe.

The company has hired a full-time career development leader and trade training coach to hire and train field workers. Trade and professional classes are held weekly. A full-time safety director also has been hired. Safety inspections are done on every project. The company has a goal of everyone being trained on OSHA 10.

The idea is that the emphasis on safety, extensive training and culture all translate to the best possible service, and that each customer is completely satisfied when the vice president of marketing and branding personally delivers each customer a close out book — along with a “Jake Cake”, a pumpkin Bundt cake shaped like the company “Jake” mascot and made by Gregg Wallick's wife, Liz.

Plenty of Time on the Clock

Gregg Wallick calls the current economy the best he's ever seen. In 2017, Best Roofing responded to about 7,000 “service transactions,” which generally refers to any repair/maintenance work that doesn't

involve tearing a roof off and replacing.

“We've taken a really aggressive effort at letting people know that we are your go-to people when it comes to fixing and maintaining your roof,” Wallick said. “People like that. People don't like to talk about replacing their roofs.”

But for all of the success Best Roofing has recently, Wallick said there are reasons the company stays focused on its market in south Florida and maintains a relatively conservative approach to growth.

“More is not always better,” he said. “The contracting industry is 100 percent margin-focused. You can never make it up in volume. If you have creepage on your budgets and you start losing money on jobs, it goes nowhere fast.”

Another reason the company contains growth — familiar to most roofing contractors these days — is finding enough workers. Wallick said he could hire 100 people right now, if he could only find people with the right qualifications.

“Here we are faced with this amazing market that we could take on more work, but you don't have enough people or resources around you to do more work,” he said. “You really have to temper yourself, and throttle yourself, as to how much you can really grow.”

It's a fine balance, he said, because the company targets growth of between 10 to 15 percent annually.

“If you're not growing some, you're not creating any opportunities within your organization,” he said. “If you're not creating any sort of opportunities, you have people who are looking for opportunities who are probably going to go elsewhere.”

Looking ahead, Wallick said his primary focus these days is working with what he views as roofing's “next generation of leaders.”

“I have the privilege of working with a number of very talented people,” he said. “Understanding them and helping them achieve their objectives is what gets me excited these days.”

“I'm in the fourth quarter of my career, I've got a couple of years left in me, but I'm hopefully going to allow for Best Roofing to be a legacy company,” Wallick said in his acceptance speech. “I'm grooming my sons to take over at some point in time.”

Zack Wallick is 33, and his younger brother, Ian Wallick, 28, is a senior construction manager.

Both graduated from Florida State University and continue gaining on-the-job experience every day, using the approach their father has taken, according to Zack.

“My focus every day is just to touch base with my team, see what's going on, what are our priorities, where can I be the most influential — whether that's in the sales side or the operations side — where can I bring the most value?” he said. “And that's how I approach each day.”

“Being the no. 1 sales guy isn't what gets me excited anymore,” he added. “What gets me excited is watching others be successful and develop people.”

Zack said he “definitely learned that from my dad.”

According to Gregg Wallick, there will still be plenty of opportunity for Zack and Ian to keep learning from him as he said he “isn't going anywhere anytime soon.”

“I still have a lot of game in me,” he said. “And who would not want to play in this economy?” **RC**

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