



Show Number: 633

July 16, 2021

Jon Isaacson

The Intentional Restorer and DYOJO Show Host

Bridging the Gap between Old School Restorers and the Next Generation

This week we welcomed the Intentional Restorer and DYOJO podcast host Jon Isaacson. We're going to continue our deep dive into the restoration world but with a little different focus. Last week we had an excellent show following the RIA 75th Diamond Anniversary Convention. One of last week's guests joins us solo this week to discuss how the Old Guard Restorers (and for that matter contractors) can better relate with younger generations.

Jon Isaacson, The Intentional Restorer, is an author and host of The DYOJO podcast. Jon speaks, writes, and coaches through his organization The DYOJO helping the start-up phase owners and growth-minded restoration professionals to shorten their DANG learning curve for personal and professional development. For over two decades Jon has been working in leadership roles with organizations in the construction, hazards abatement, and property restoration industries. Jon recently published two books, *Be Intentional: Estimating addressing mindset and habits for insurance claims estimating* and *Be Intentional: Culture* which is a collaborative work discussing how small things enhance or undermine your efforts to build a strong workplace culture.

Nuggets mined from this week's show:

Have you always worked in the Northwest or have you worked in other parts of the country?

Jon was born raised and continually worked in the Pacific Northwest and in CA.

What's your background and how did you get into restoration? As a young boy, Jon began working and learning the construction trade from his Uncle who promised him that if he did good work he would be paid well. Jon managed a cabinet shop a job which he loved. He then took a job as a carpet cleaner and from there learned water damage restoration and mold remediation. Jon's father-in-law is a full time pastor who also does cement work.

Explain your "intentional" moniker? In 2018, Jon wrote one of the top articles in R&R magazine on the subject of Xactware. He was asked by magazine's editor Michelle Blevins to write a monthly article on the same subject, an offer Jon declined. Xactware is only one component of restoration. Michelle coined the moniker "intentional restorer" for Jon. While there are thousands of firms engaged in restoration, there aren't thousands of problems. All the firms have the same problems: finding and keeping staff, pricing, 3rd party oversight, etc.

How and where did you learn the lessons you are teaching others? Jon engaged with the industry by reading R&R magazine, IEConnections, and listening to IAQ Radio. He feels super fortunate that his first boss at ServiceMaster was encouraging. He has persistently sought out good voices from whom he could learn.

He opined that IAQ Radio provides the high level view and that he is trying to pursue the junior high view on his podcast. Jon is fiercely independent regarding his style and programming, he doesn't want to be governed by sponsors. He wants to "control his own cookie jar".

From the business perspective do you find it easier to relate to people age 35 and under? Jon, born in 1982, describes himself as a "bridge millennial" or a "geriatric millennial" because he was born on the millennial cusp. Jon feels like an "old soul" who is equally comfortable with both millennials and old guys.

What is the biggest complaint among those 35 and under about older business people? Older generations expect younger generations to pay their dues. There is a positive effect of earning stripes. Younger generations feel they are further along than they are. Dunning Kruger song from Incompetence Opera <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdnH19KsVVc>

What is your consulting style? First the client must be able to articulate their specific needs and then Jon will tackle it through coaching or consulting. Jon's philosophy is to stay in his lane and not drag out the job.

The boss discussion. The first thing he tells his staff is to do their job. Everyone doing their job builds trust. The staff will rise to the occasion in the event of emergencies.

If you taught a 5 day course what would you teach? Jon believes in 4 pillars of: People (get the right people on the bus and in the right seats), Production, Profit and Progress

It's indisputable that those under 35 embrace and are good with using technology, what other business skills are inherent? Communicating and sharing information in real time. Super Bowl ads are now shared before the Super Bowl.

How did you decide on calling your show DYOJO? The name is derived from "do your own job, dojo". With self effacing humor, Jon says that he got into podcasting because he enjoys writing, and not as many people enjoy reading. With tongue in cheek, he describes his podcast as the industry's most mediocre with 12 faithful listeners.

What influenced you to do your show in the style you use? Michelle Blevins encouraged Jon to make short videos to go along with his articles in R&R magazine. He began making "cringy" videos in his garage and inserting short film clips to hold audience attention. Jon gave a shout-out to Gerret Stier as an influencer. <https://open.spotify.com/show/1irvPxuF7k4Glyk0FOTAsf>

Tip for young people- The key to growth is community. Be willing to earn your stripes. When you engage with Old Guys sit, observe, and ask what you can do for them not what they can do for you?

Round Up:

Z-Man - There are only 2 ways to obtain trust, either earn it or have someone trusted vouch. Publicly apologized to Jon for being aloof and being unresponsive to Jon's attempts to engage. I didn't know him, didn't know where he was coming from and therefore didn't trust him. I've overcome my hesitancy.

Jon Isaacson - It took hard work and persistence to pierce the veil and earn acceptance from Pete Consigli by learning the history of the industry. Over the course of their discussion Pete labelled Jon a "persistent bastard".

Restoration Global Watchdog Pete Consigli - After the RIA Convention, Pete and Jon spent several days together traveling through Florida avoiding the hurricane. When Pete arrived home; he found his AC off and that his roof had leaked. This reminded him of the restorers' sense of reality and feelings of empathy for others.

Now there are only four. Pete wrote two historical articles of which he kept 5 copies of each, he has entrusted Jon with one of each.

Building Science Corp.'s Summer Camp 2021 was cancelled; Joe Lstiburek promises that Summer Camp 2022 will be epic!

Update of 1991 building science book:

<https://www.buildingscience.com/bookstore/books/moisture-control-residential-buildings>

Trivia:

Question: Historically speaking, which of history's big bangs occurred on today's date?

Answer: 1945, The United States detonates the first atomic bomb in a test at Alamogordo, N. M.

Winner: Bruce White

Z-Man signing off

Jon Isaacson Convention Wrap up

Reflections on my first RIA Convention (in a long time)

I am writing this as I reflect on my time at the Restoration Industry Association (RIA) 2021 Convention and Expo. This event was packed with anticipation as it was the first in-person event since the shutdowns of 2020 as well as a celebration of the 75th anniversary of RIA's rise to become, in the words of Ed Cross, *The Restoration Lawyer*, "The oldest, largest, best funded and best organized association representing the interests of restoration contractors in the US and around the world." Many titans of our industry returned to reconnect with their peers, of whom they have worked side by side to tackle the issues shared by restoration professionals over these past decades. Katie Smith so eloquently characterized this common plight as she received the award for the 2021 Women in Restoration, "There are thousands of contractors, but we don't have thousands of problems. We all have the same major headaches." In the midst of celebrating all of this amazing history and looking to build upon the advocacy momentum of recent years, one nugget that stuck out to me was the power of humility.

The calm assurance of a humble achiever

How many countless hours and resources, literally blood, sweat, and tears, have been invested in the formation of our industry? It is beyond quantification. When you dig into property restoration history, you uncover innovators like those that [Pete Consigli](#), *The Global Watchdog*, dubbed "The Founding Fathers of Restoration" in his penultimate article from October 2000. Two of them, Lloyd Weaver and Martin "Marty" L. King, are no longer with us. Yet the other two faces on Mount Restoration, Cliff "The Z Man" Zlotnik and Claude Blackburn, along with many other incredible contributors, humbly walked the halls of this event. They don't introduce themselves as founders of marquee brands or creators of some of the most successful products and industry-leading processes. Their mark is embedded into the fabric of how dedicated restorers do business. Being around several of these persons of character reminded me that being humble does not mean thinking of yourself too lowly. Someone who thinks too highly of themselves caps their contributions with self-aggrandizement, and someone who thinks too lowly of themselves caps their contributions with self-elimination. Claude and Cliff both spoke about seeing a need and having the willingness to attempt to help their fellow restorers find solutions to their problems.

Having the persistence to be helpful

Some young restorers, like myself, have discovered that it isn't easy to pierce the veil of what is perceived as the inner sanctum. I am still patiently knocking on doors that have only been cracking after many months of work behind the scenes to prove my intentions. I am thankful to call Pete, and several others, among my friends and growing acquaintances, but my progress hasn't come easy. It may be missed that even though many of these giants are friends, or friendly, now, this current reality does not mean that they didn't have their disagreements and

interpersonal issues as they were each trying to do the right thing. As the industry matured, so did the need for codifying how upstanding restorers should conduct themselves. Out of these initiatives arose principles such as the industry standards of care, training programs, designations, and the RIA Code of Ethics. Rusty Amarante shared sentiments from the stage, that were echoed by others, that before you brag about how much money you are making you should first be proud of your ethics and the manner in which your team members do business as doctors of disaster.

Unity does not mean conformity

The property restoration industry has had its issues with [collaboration](#), from top to bottom and all levels in between, wherever ego arises it erodes progress. Cliff Zlotnik shared something that was true *back then* and not surprisingly is still true of the modern era, “Change didn’t occur very easy.” He made this comment while talking about the development of the Water Loss Institute (WLI), at a time when water damage restoration was “the new kid in town.” This is hard for modern restorers to believe as mitigation is one of the largest segments under the restoration umbrella of services in this era. The early water guys had to fight to elevate their representation and develop their educational opportunities. Many of them are humble warriors who have a calm assurance of what they were able to contribute and with whom they were able to find common ground in order to achieve their goals. Speaking of the value of RIA, Cliff noted, “The shortcut to growth is community.” This aligns with our goal at The DYOJO Podcast to help restorers shorten their DANG learning curve. To the degree that our pioneering restoration alumnus operated *in a manner consistent with ethical principles and sound business practices*, they were able to achieve benchmarks such as consensus-based industry standards that have helped guide the development of our craft. This spirit of connecting over shared values and collaborating to conquer our obstacles is one that we must carry forward if our industry is going to continue to thrive and gain back some of the ground that has been lost.

Knowing when to listen

My favorite proverb goes, “I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw.” I have to constantly remind myself to shut up and listen, especially when I am sitting with people who have forgotten more restoration truths than I am likely to obtain. The internet has democratized information, in that there is no barrier to sharing your thoughts, but it has also created a lot of noise which can make it difficult to discern quality content. I would encourage anyone reading to seek out excellence through arenas where you can break bread with those who have endured the problems that you are facing. Unity does not mean that we all fall in line, which some may perceive as the key to being in the ‘good ol’ boys’ club. I can guarantee you that restorers, even the old dogs, are not a monolith. Unity means that we have face-to-face discussions, not just to air perceived grievances, but to find common ground to move the greater good forward. As Mark Springer, and many others expressed, it’s not about you, if it is it will only go so far. Give everyone the opportunity to show you who they are,

rather than be shaped by perceptions, and show people who you are by rolling up your sleeves before you open your mouth.

RIA members adopt and abide by the following Code of Ethics

As providers of property damage restoration, remediation and cleaning services to the public, we subscribe to the following principles in our relationships with customers, employees and business associates:

- To treat our customers and their property with care and respect.
- To provide professional service in accordance with high standards of practice that will, where possible, restore the customer's property to its pre-damaged or pre-soiled condition.
- To operate in a manner consistent with ethical principles and sound business practice.
- To be proficient in our work through ongoing participation in education and training.
- To provide our customer with accurate information concerning the scope of work required and its costs, maintaining strict impartiality in our professional opinions.
- To disclose to the customer any connection we may have to their insurer or any other interested third party.