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Trent Darden

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Joining Forces

This week we welcomed Tom Peter and Trent Darden for a show we titled Joining Forces. Trent and Tom are part of the management team at First Onsite. Both have unique skills and experience that our audience benefited hearing about.

Trent Darden is SVP of Operations, US East at First Onsite Property Restoration. He was formerly the COO and spent 20 years working at Rolyn Companies of Rockville, MD. Trent started with Rolyn in 2000 as a Project Manager, where he worked exclusively on large loss insurance claims, handling all related estimating and general project management. In 2007, he was named the Vice President of Rolyn's Estimating and Consulting Department. As Rolyn's Chief Operating Officer, Trent worked with all of their offices to ensure delivery of the quality service our clients know and expect. A Virginia native, Mr. Darden has lived in the Tidewater area for over forty years. He began working in construction immediately following high school, and throughout his college career at Tidewater Community College and Old Dominion University where he pursued a degree in business.

Tom Peter, MS, CIH is the General Manager at First Onsite Property Restoration. He was formerly the CEO of Insurance Restoration Specialists of Monroe, NJ. Tom has supervised just about every type of hazardous waste, indoor environmental quality, mold remediation, water damage restoration project there is and all while in the shoes of a Certified Industrial Hygienist. His vast experience in the field and education make him the go to guy in the restoration world for everyday and emerging issues in the restoration industry. Tom is also a CIH working as a contractor, something unique in the disaster restoration industry. He sees himself

someone with a scientific and technical background but with realistic and practical solutions.

Nuggets mined from today's episode:

Coincidentally, both Trent Darden and Tom Peter each have 20 years of disaster restoration experience. Trent began his career in government construction contracting and then joined Rolyn. Rolyn became part of First Onsite 3 years ago. Tom, a CIH (Certified Industrial Hygienist) worked in asbestos abatement and indoor air quality testing prior to joining IRS as their inhouse expert, a CIH.

In 2018, Tom was overwhelmed with late summer mold projects in schools. In New Jersey and elsewhere, it's a common practice for schools to shut off air conditioning during the summer to conserve energy and save money. This decision commonly results in mold blooms in schools.

Tom's office is currently receiving 5-8 calls per day for COVID disinfection services. His firm performs this work according to New Jersey State protocols. The protocol specifies that areas be isolated, cleaned and disinfected prior to re-occupancy. COVID raised awareness of indoor environmental quality in schools. Tom relies on the TOMI SteraMist for sensitive environments such as pharmaceutical and opines that SteraMist is overkill for day-to-day mold or COVID but still is a valuable application for medical and clean room disinfection.

ATP is used by some First Onsite offices for internal quality control purposes. Tom is critical of mold removal clearance based solely upon air sampling. Tom is an advocate for using 3rd party IHS or IEPs to do clearance. Even though Tom is CIH, we don't do our own post clearance testing.

Post Remediation Clearance is a temporary condition. It is a snapshot of the air quality shortly after remediation. It is import to sample and do final inspections within 2-3 days and he emphasized the importance of a visual inspection.

According to Tom, the COVID relief funding aimed at improving HVAC systems in schools was spent on other things. While CO² monitoring and portable air cleaners are being used in Canada to measure and improve IEQ, Tom hasn't encountered this among his clients. Tom is aware of one college that is using a UV Robot to

disinfect rooms. Some schools may be making improvements and doing more testing, but I just haven't come across it.

Tom is an advocate of source removal HVAC system cleaning. Post remediation variation is based upon visual inspection, photo documentation and pressure differential measurements. HVAC encapsulation is used as a last resort. Some First Onsite offices perform HVAC systems cleaning inhouse while others subcontract this service. Tom will be sharing his HVAC system cleaning, industrial hygiene and IAQ knowledge and experience with other First Onsite offices.

Consolidation of the industry: Why is the cleaning and restoration industry consolidating? Drivers include: opportunity to join forces with like-minded others, provide greater growth opportunities for staff, expand customer service, expand spheres of business influence nationally and internationally, allow owners to cash out.

Disaster restoration is a reactive business. Opportunities for cross training occur when different offices work jointly on projects. For employee training First Onsite relies upon both inhouse and contracted subject matter experts.

First Onsite is developing Standard Operating Procedures. Biohazard projects are the hardest to standardize because every project is different, projects may be subject to federal or local regulations. There is a requirement to know the regulation.

Change Management

"Change management is defined as the methods and manners in which a company describes and implements change within both its internal and external processes. This includes preparing and supporting employees, establishing the necessary steps for change, and monitoring pre- and post-change activities to ensure successful implementation.

Significant organizational change can be challenging. It often requires many levels of cooperation and may involve different independent entities within an organization. Developing a structured approach to change is critical to help ensure a beneficial transition while mitigating disruption.

Changes usually fail for human reasons: the promoters of the change did not attend to the healthy, real and predictable reactions of normal people to disturbance of their routines. Effective communication is one of the most important success factors for effective change management. All involved individuals must understand the progress through the various stages and see results as the change cascades.” Source <https://asq.org/quality-resources/change-management>

Infection Control Risk Assessment. Rolyn was a pioneer in providing a variety services to healthcare facilities. First Onsite constructs site-built containment structures, uses hard containment panels or combines both methods. First Onsite rents, installs and uninstalls hard containment panels.

According to Trent, ICRA 2.0 is focused on reducing airborne particulate. <https://www.hfmmagazine.com/articles/4334-ashe-publishes-revised-infection-control-risk-assessment-guide>

Most wildfire work is commercial, institutional or industrial. There is a mix of residential work and we follow industry standards for fire and smoke cleaning if it is commercial or residential.

Logistics-

First Onsite has many offices along the gulf coast. A reactionary business which needs to mobilize to the storm. Adjust and refocus assets. Try to proactively manage as much as possible. Learn from each storm. Limited equipment available for purchase and rental. Having more people on the bench is a huge asset for First Onsite. With our recent growth, now we have more resources to handle any size disaster.

First Onsite Promise: Be “The only restoration partner you’ll ever need.” Educate staff and clients. People first business client and staff. Career path. Focus on the next generation.

Armor Process is the combination of deep cleaning and disinfection with a residual antimicrobial aftertreatment.

Facility Hygiene is a concept of a healthy indoor environment. Tom has been using this term for 15 years, considering the interior of facility from a cleanliness perspective, holistically.

National healthcare client had a large water loss in Texas, which was restored by 3 First Onsite offices. Opportunity to spread knowledge and quality service.

Roundup-

For contractors who are interested in becoming part of something bigger, Trent Darden advises to take a deep dive into your financials. Don't make the employees nervous by prematurely revealing your intentions. It is better to talk to the staff in general terms about industry happenings.

Tom Peter's company was 35 years old, financially strong, with a strong client base. The review and acquisition process is grueling, but was worth it...we chose the right company to partner with, First Onsite.

With Global Restoration Watchdog, Pete Consigli.

- Reminiscent of the FRAM oil filter commercial, "pay me now or pay me later". Mike Guinness, a New Jersey based safety and indoor environmental quality consultant whose business peaks late every summer due to mold blooms in schools. When will schools ever learn? These mold problems in schools are preventable by operating the HVAC systems to run all summer.
- Rollups are a sign of a maturing industry. Many RIA members have profited from rollups. Rollups are good for the industry: provide exit mechanism for industry veterans who run successful businesses, growth opportunities for employees, etc. Strong competition keeps the players on their toes.
- Pete sees the Coke and Pepsi challenge to be between First Onsite and Belfor the Global Leader.
- Its hard for little guys to go it alone.

Z-Man signing off

Trivia:

Name the term for the business strategy of acquiring and merging multiple smaller companies within the same industry and combining them into a large company?

Answer:

Rollup Answered by: Don Weekes, 1073 Borden Side Road, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2C 3P3