



IAQ RADIO+

Show Number: 773

Jack White

Life and Times & “Jack’s House”

Good Day and welcome to IAQ Radio+ episode 773 blog. This week featured another industry icon Life and Times show with Jack White; retired, Vice President of Technical Services at Rainbow International and advocate for their hands-on water damage restoration facility known as Jack’s House.

Jack White is a legendary figure in the cleaning and restoration field—starting on a truck in 1977 and rising to lead training and R&D for Rainbow International (now Rainbow Restoration). Jack recently retired from his position as Vice President of Technical Services at Rainbow International. He was in charge of research & development, training, providing technical services and support for over 400 Rainbow International specialty cleaning and disaster restoration services domestically and internationally. Jack holds many technician and advance level designations in cleaning and restoration and is an IICRC approved instructor. He was active in both industry and consumer affairs serving on the board of directors of RIA, as a regional supervisor for the IICRC and as a member of the Better Business Bureau’s National Panel of Consumer Arbitrators.

Nuggets mined from today’s episode

Jack, you started in the early days of "water restoration" which us old timers now refer to as the “suck, spray and pray” days.

How did you get into the business? In 1977 Jack bought a new Trans Am and was dating a girl who was working for the predecessor of Rainbow. In 1984, Jack sold the car he loved to buy and outfit a van for carpet cleaning and dyeing as a commission-based subcontractor. He later was invited to work for corporate. He has been married to the girl for 47 years.

The Don Dwyer Era: You worked closely with Don Dwyer during the birth of Rainbow Restoration. What was the core philosophy he instilled in the company that you've carried through your entire career? Loyalty, integrity and hard work, importance of core values in business.

During the award ceremony for your Martin King Award, you were referred to as a cowboy, what does that label mean to you in the corporate world? Having loyalty and integrity, being upfront, honest and representing the company well.

"In the early days, we relied heavily on extraction, and aggressive drying tactics floating wet carpet, pulling base moldings, drilling wall cavities, etc. and in retrospect we had very few problems. Today, it's all about psychrometrics, airflow and documentation. Do you think we've swung too far from common sense to the now where psychrometry is everything?" Jack agreed that we've swung away from practical and common sense to the complicated. He opined that there should be a middle ground and that it would be tough for the industry to shift back. While it's hard to teach common sense; during training students are taught to think things through and analyze.

Story of Jack's House: Jack White understanding the value of doing hands-on training in a dedicated water damage facility (flood house) advocated for and subsequently convinced management to invest in building one. Jack's recommendation was timely as Rainbow had relocated its distribution center and a 5,000 sqft warehouse was available in which to build the 1,200 facility. In addition to the high initial cost, there is the \$12,000 to refurbish annually.

Training philosophy: "You've spent years flooding and drying 'Jack's House.' Is it more important for students to succeed or fail in a controlled environment before they ever step onto a real customer's property?" It's more important to fail during training than to succeed. By intentionally using a broad range of materials including difficult to dry building materials in Jack's House. Allowing students to make mistakes in a controlled environment before working on customer properties is an important training philosophy. Multiple instructors lead small groups of students through various hands-on training exercises.

Training tough choices: What's more important doing the right thing for the situation or doing the right thing for the bottom line? Honesty and integrity are to guide the decision-making process. I hope the franchisees have the integrity to

withstand pressure from insurance carriers. How to do it the right way for the right reasons.

'Lightbulb' Moments: "When you're training a new franchisee or tech, what are the concepts they usually struggle with most, and how do you know when they finally 'get it'?" Young students have short attention spans. Students struggle most with psychrometry, moisture meters and efficient equipment placement. We know they "get it" when they lose the 'deer in headlights look' and can confidently lead and help others with it. Jack emphasized the importance of hands-on training over online learning, noting that COVID-19 had led to a shift toward online training at the expense of practical experience. Some franchisees are "buying a job". Jack explained that while technical training is essential, business management skills are equally important but often overlooked by franchise owners who focus on technical expertise. Jack clarified the franchise support structure with business coaches providing guidance on business operations while technical support remains separate, with success measured by field performance reviews.

Soft Skills vs. Technical: "We can teach anyone to read a moisture meter. How do you teach a technician to handle a homeowner who has just lost everything?" Have students imagine how you would feel under the same circumstances. Successful techs are empathetic.

The Labor Gap: "The industry is facing a massive talent shortage. Based on your years in training, how does industry need to change its pitch to attract the next generation of 'Jack Whites'?" Seek employees with strong values. Employees reflect the business. Successful businesses attract good employees.

Bilingual training: With franchisees in foreign countries, does Rainbow offer any bilingual training? Franchises in the US, Canada and UK learn in English. Franchises in Germany are taught in German. Drying techniques are significantly different in Europe and Scandinavia, where buildings may be very old and unique drying challenges commonly such as "cork composite floors" or "cork underlayment floors." They combine layers of concrete with cork to provide insulation and sound absorption. Drying involves drilling into the center core and injecting dry air under high pressure. Lengthy drying times are required.

The R&D Process: "As the head of R&D, how did you decide which new technologies were 'gamechangers' and which were just expensive gadgets? What was your

'litmustest' for new equipment?" We would invite manufacturers to bring their equipment to Jack's House for trial and evaluation. When heat drying was trendy, we individually tried all the heat systems in a flooded Jack's House scenario and found the costs for heat drying to be prohibitive. Jack was an early adopter of infrared cameras when they were \$9K and now they can be purchased for a few hundred dollars. Due to rising costs, we have shifted away from requiring truck mounted carpet cleaning and extraction equipment for new franchises.

Successor: What specific advice have you given your successor to ensure the transition is seamless and the standards remain high? David Hessel knows the drill. After Jack retired in March, he stayed on to assist David Hessel in transitioning. David spent over 10 years as a business owner in the restoration industry as well as 10+ years of residential home construction, building custom homes, custom cabinetry and finish carpentry.

Standards: "You've been deeply involved with the IICRC and industry standards. Looking back, which standard change do you think had the biggest positive impact on success of the average restorer? Are you concerned when prescriptive IICRC standards are weaponized against restorers?" The S-500 water restoration standard has given us a framework to develop curriculum for and teach too. Shares concern over standards being weaponized against restorers, agrees that less prescriptive standards may be advantageous, and it may be too late to change.

Back to the future:

When we spoke 12 years ago you advised that Rainbow had moved away from applying antimicrobials on clean water losses, is this still the case? Yes, generally Rainbow applies antimicrobials on category 2 and category 3 water losses.

When we spoke 12 years ago Jack opined that restoration contractors should generate 80% of their business themselves and rely on preferred vendor programs for only 20% of their business, is this still the case? Yes, even more so now; Rainbow stresses the importance of franchisees generating their own business.

Final Advice: "As you prepare for retirement, what is the one 'golden rule' of restoration you want to leave behind for the people currently running those 2:00 AM emergency calls?" Have integrity, represent the company well, and make the customer better than before.

ROUNDUP

Pete Consigli, Global Restoration Watchdog, Industry Historian and Moisture Mob Consigliere.

- Pete is an industry historian
- Rainbow was renowned for their carpet dyeing skills
- Gary Loiben, Unsmoke and Legends Brand trainer was a former Rainbow International franchise owner and corporate employee.
- Pete, working for Dri-Eaz, met Jack at a Rainbow regional meeting.
- While at dinner with an executive from Rainbow Pete was asked a serious question. Pete offered 2 options: 1) what Pete really thinks or 2) what Pete thought you want to hear. The executive chose option 1.
- Mea culpa, Pete accepts responsibility for introducing Rainbow to psychrometry.
- Pete agrees that the industry focused too much attention on psychrometry, GPP and specific humidity and not enough on dewpoint. Pete credits Mickey Lee, Lew Harriman and Munters for stressing the importance of dewpoint.
- Rainbows and Jack's contributions to the cleaning and restoration industry: advocate for and supporter of associations, gang of 9 who spent 10K volunteer hours creating the RIA Body of Knowledge, volunteer work on FS1 and FS2 fire standards which morphed into IICRC S-700 fire standard, term as RIA treasurer, core values of loyalty and integrity carried through the succession of Rainbow presidents, Dina Dwyer (hire your weakness),
- Pete first met Josh at a WLS class in Phoenix. After the class, Josh approached Pete and told him that he thought he could teach the course someday. Pete's initial thought was that Josh was arrogant; Pete's second thought was that Josh reminded him of himself in his younger days.
- You can't teach techs to be honest.
- You can't make people be nice, so hire nice people.
- Pete, told Jack about the Moisture Mob meeting in Dublin where Ron Rutledge; stood up and in front of the group acknowledged Cliff Zlotnik for changing his life.

Josh Miller. President of Rainbow Restoration

- Josh reflected on his career journey and the lessons learned from Jack

- Josh acknowledged that he owes his career to Jack White
- Josh and Jack met at a JonDon strategies for success course
- You never know what the future holds
- Always give people the benefit of doubt
- At the **right time** and at the **right place** (National Account Team Meeting), Jack White **said what needed to be said** in the **right way** (graciously and elegantly).

Z-Man signing off

TRIVIA

In 1981 when what business that is now known as Rainbow Restoration was formed, what 2 primary services did the business provide?

Answer: carpet cleaning and dyeing