Business Principles for Business Principals

By Troy Watkins
Running a successful construction business is challenging, especially in these economic times. Running a successful family-owned construction business that has thrived since 1919 is an amazing accomplishment. Marois Bros., Inc., stands as a testament to tradition and quality. Ralph Marois ’87 and David Marois ’89, fourth generation in the business, have taken their Assumption education and helped lead the company through good times and bad.

The Marois name has been well-known and well-respected in and around Worcester for nearly a century. In 1919 Deus Marois and his sons, Ralph, Isidore and George, established a sand and gravel business. Under Ralph, the company incorporated in 1924 as Marois Bros., Inc., expanding and specializing in industrial and commercial site development.

Ralph’s son, Normand ’57, went straight into the family business after graduating from Assumption and built on his father’s success. The business and an Assumption education are traditions that run deep in this family. Norm and his wife Gloria had five children – Nancy ’80, Ralph ’87, David ’89, Jeffrey and Barbara. Nancy’s husband, David Winn, is president of Marois Bros. The younger Ralph serves as vice president/treasurer, David is a project manager and Jeffrey is a field superintendent.

Maries Bros. employs up to 100 people, depending on the season and workload. Ralph has a keen perspective on the keys to the company’s success. “Our industry is built on relationships, trust and performance,” he said. “People can rely on our company. That’s been our history, and if you operate that way, people will hire you again.”

David added, “We address issues as a team and hire people that are like-minded. Our goal is to always provide quality work — and that’s why we’re successful.” Their best advertising, they both believe, comes from the recommendations of satisfied customers.

“We are very fortunate to have numerous loyal, dedicated employees doing consistently great work in all areas of the business,” said Ralph. “It’s a family business that includes a lot of employees who become like family, which has helped us maintain our good reputation.”

Ralph’s family ties to Assumption, and the promise of its strong liberal arts program, drew him to the College. A non-traditional student, married with a child, he commuted to campus to earn his degree in management. After a few years working on a real estate development project owned by his father, he decided to rejoin the family construction business, and returned to Assumption for continuing education in accounting. He eventually worked his way up to his current position as treasurer.

David also grew up with the Assumption tradition and liked the size and sense of community at the College. He majored in accounting and enjoyed taking courses in a variety of academic disciplines. David was especially inspired by Professor Bill Sullivan, as well as Bro. Robert Beaulac, A.A. “I learned to be more self-reliant and self-motivated at Assumption, and I got more attention than I could have at a large college,” David said. “As I get older, I appreciate my Assumption education more.”

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Though both David and Ralph “grew up” in the business working as laborers, they both tried their hands at something different after graduating from Assumption. Both brothers returned to the family business with a broader perspective and clearer focus. “I realized that I liked the business aspect of the construction industry and returned to the company at a management level (rather than accounting),” David explained. “Although the nature of each project is similar, it comes with unique challenges to address and overcome in order to make it a success. I enjoy that part of my job the most.”

Maries Bros., guided by Norm and Gloria, has been proud to support many local organizations, including Assumption College. “We’re blessed with parents who have helped us recognize the benefits of being charitable,” Ralph said. “They’ve always loved the College and have supported it well through the years. As President’s Council members, we’re trying to continue the legacy of what our parents began.”

Both Ralph and David speak affectionately about their father and the reputation Norm built for himself and the company. “I’m constantly approached by individuals who know my father and who tell me how highly they think of him,” said David. “I think he remains the backbone of our company. We realize that we have a lot to live up to.”

The brothers contend that Norm’s pride of ownership and how well he treated his employees and his clients is a key to the business’s longevity and success. Today, the fourth generation of the Marois family continues that proud legacy. ✫