



FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS AWARDS

Less than 30% of businesses last more than 10 years. That's what makes the success of our Top Family-Owned Businesses so phenomenal. Founded in 1971, Baxter Gardens has grown from a small retail garden center to become a cornerstone of the community. William Weishaar Sr., founder of the company, passed the business to his three sons: James Weishaar (left), Bill Weishaar Jr. (center) and Chris Weishaar (right). Together, they have continued to grow the company.

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Baxter Gardens

baxtergardens.com

Generation of Ownership: 2nd

Founded: 1971



From left to right, James Weishaar, Bill Weishaar Jr., and Chris Weishaar.

Q&A with James Weishaar of Baxter Gardens

What was the focus of the business when it was founded, and how has that changed over the years?

Baxter Gardens was originally the retail and residential landscape design branch of Baxter Farms, where Bill Weishaar, Sr. had worked for almost a decade. His idea was to take the quality nursery installations and expand it beyond commercial projects, making it available for retail sale as well as custom design builds for individual homeowners. With the move to Chesterfield in 1977, Baxter Gardens filled the niche of custom landscape design for new and revitalized homes throughout West County. The expansion into irrigation and low-voltage lighting installation and service as well as full-service grounds maintenance has fueled the company's growth since the early 2000's. Baxter Gardens currently works with many of St. Louis's premier custom home builders as a one stop shop for landscape, irrigation, and lighting installations. With fifty years in the nursery business, our portfolio of services has expanded to include patios, retaining walls, water features, and many styles of landscape design.

What traditions have you upheld within your family business?

We often talk about how our "family business" does not stop at just the Weishaar family, but also includes the families that have worked for us through the years. Many of our crew leaders have recommended their relatives to work here, which speaks volumes about the respect we show our employees and the culture we have created. The same can be said for our clients, trusting Baxter Gardens to design their landscape, but also continually update and expand year-after-year. This reflects not only the quality of our work, but the client-centered process. To then extend our services to their own families and the homes of their children makes our family business reach much further than just our ownership.

What have been your family's keys to success in business?

Bill Sr.'s original idea was to tailor each design to the client's individual preferences and home style. Although the plant material has changed in the last fifty years, the main principles of contrasting color, height, and texture have remained the foundation of our designs. We have been able to succeed by focusing on a quality product while also being flexible in what we deliver. No two homeowners are the same and neither are our designs. While commitment to quality is our foundation, it is the level of customer service that truly sets Baxter Gardens apart.

Computer St. Louis

www.computerstlouis.com

Generation of Ownership: 2nd

Year Founded: 1996

Q&A with Seth Russell of Computer St. Louis.

What was the focus of the business when it was founded, and how has that changed over the years?

In 1996, Jim Russell started the business as a retail store selling computers and components and providing technical troubleshooting for individual clients. His son Seth grew up in the business working alongside his father while learning each role within the company along the way. In 2006, Seth purchased the business from his father, and Computer St. Louis became a legacy company.

Soon after purchasing the business, Seth recognized the need that small businesses had for IT, and the company branched out into business networking and IT. As Seth has noted, "While retail stores are being replaced with convenient online ordering, businesses always have the need for technology. We slowly started doing more and more services for businesses, and within the next few years, we had fully transitioned from retail to a focus on businesses infrastructure. It's a completely different world than it was in 1996, and I'm really proud of how much we have grown and changed to meet the business needs of our clients, while still maintaining the values that are important to us." Seth's wife and father in law also play active roles in the company, so Seth has become accustomed to Computer St. Louis as a community of family members.



Seth Russell, second generation owner of Computer St. Louis

What have been your family's keys to success in business?

The biggest thing that we focus on is doing whatever it takes to deliver value for the customer. Customers quickly pick up on our commitment to them, and I think that's part of why so many of our clients have been with us long-term. Taking that responsibility seriously and focusing on finding solutions means that we will work with vendors to reduce the number of IT tasks that they must take on. We want our customers to focus on their businesses.

Along with taking care of the customer, we try to make sure our employees are taken care of as well. We have monthly company lunches, fun events a few times a year, and monthly prizes for going above and beyond. Some of our awards include free airline travel, different technologies, or gift cards to local restaurants.

I really believe our relationships with customers and employees are a huge part of our success. We try to show how much we value them every day, and I hope this article helps to pass on some of our success to inspire others in the small-business community.



Bill Yount Signs and Electric
Billyountsigns.com
Generation of Ownership: 2nd
Founded: 1976
Founded in 1976, Bill Yount Signs and Electric provides design, installation and service of high-quality signs and lighting in the St. Louis region. Over the years, the company has designed and installed some of the highest profile signs in the area, including Busch Stadium.

Flanagan Paint
Flanagantpaint.com
Generation of Ownership: 2nd
Founded: 1950
Flanagan Paint is a second-generation, independent, paint retailer. The company offers paint, paint supplies and window treatments for retail and construction buyers. Customers including remodelers, contractors, designers, and DIYer's. The company is a firm believer in supporting the local community through donations, sponsorships and events.

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Evans Production Engineering ownership team: (from left to right), Suzanne Evans, Tom Evans, and Roy Evans. (Suzanne and Roy are Tom's parents).

Evans Production Engineering

Evanspe.com
Generation of Ownership: 3rd
Founded: 1966

Q&A with Tom Evans of Evans Production Engineering

What was the focus of the business when it was founded, and how has your focus changed over the years?

Ben Evans started Evans Production Engineering Co. with his two sons, Lyle and Roy, with a focus on designing and building high-production machines. Due to customer demand, the company added manufacturing. The second generation advanced the company into computer numerical control (CNC) manufacturing. The current generation is growing the business with customized production on high-speed CNC machines, and continues to reduce manufacturing costs and improve quality through improved manufacturing techniques and training.

What traditions have you upheld within your family business?

At Evans Production Engineering Co., all employees are considered family. The business is built on trust and honesty. Everyone involved with the business works together to meet the customer's needs.

What has been your family's key to success in business?

The ability to listen to our customer's needs and adapt to a market that requires higher quality, shorter lead times, lower costs and order quantities.

Industrial Soap Company

Industrialsoap.com

Founded: 1933

Industrial Soap Company has been owned and operated by the Shapiro family since 1933. The company supplies the St. Louis area with thousands of items, including cleaning supplies, paper and safety products, corrugated products, and more. Industrial Soap Company supports many area businesses—both large and small—including hospitals, nursing homes, restaurants, convenience stores, and retail stores.

Oaktree Products

Oaktreeproducts.com

Oaktree Products serves as a trusted resource for audiologists and other hearing health care professionals and is committed to providing the highest level of customer service. As a multi-line distributor of hearing health care products, the company offers more than 4,200 products intended for use in the clinical environment or for resale to patients. The company also provides information, product solutions and technical training/education to the hearing industry and hearing health care professionals.

O'Brien Tire & Auto Care

Obrientire.com

Generation of Ownership: 3rd generation

Founded: mid-1920s

Q&A with Scott Buenget, President of O'Brien Tire & Auto Care

What was the focus of the business when it was founded, and how has that changed over the years?

In the 1920's, the business started as a gas station and oil-change garage that sold tires. Over the years the company expanded into appliances and bikes. In the 60's, we expanded again and became a wholesaler for the St. Louis area tire market—until tire manufacturers stepped into selling direct to retail stores. Over time, we also grew our commercial business as the city grew. Recently, O'Brien Tire & Auto has been accredited by AAA, NAPA, and Technet Professionals, making us to be one of a few, if not the only, auto-care center in the metro St. Louis area with all three accreditations, a testament to the quality of work that we provide. Also, we recently added a shuttle service for customers to get to work, without having to wait for repairs. Just this year, the internationally known Route 66 Magazine and the Illinois Route 66 Magazine featured O'Brien Tire & Auto as the oldest-running, auto-repair facility on Route 66, which we are very proud of.

What traditions have you upheld within your family business?

To offer good, old fashioned service—fast, friendly, and reliable at a fair price. To do our absolute best to make every customer happy.

Over the 90 years that we have been in business, cars have evolved to be nearly as complicated as a human body with thousands of moving parts, essentially computers on wheels. We like to use the analogy of going to the doctor and telling the doctor you have a pain. The doctor has to examine you and then order tests. A doctor can spend days, weeks, or months before reaching a diagnosis. With cars, most people expect auto-repair facilities to tell them what is wrong with their cars within 15 minutes, to diagnose the cars' problems for free, and then to fix their cars that same day, all for as little money as possible. Our tradition also involves performing this "magic" without a customer ever having to give a second thought to what all is involved.

What have been your family's keys to success in business?

1. Providing excellent customer service. 2. Building trust by taking a long-term view of our relationships with customers. 3. Being honest in resolving automotive problems at a fair price.



Fitness Plus Equipment Services, Inc.

Fitness-plus.com

Generation of Ownership: 2nd

Founded: 1995

Fitness Plus Equipment Services, Inc. (Fitness Plus) is an e-commerce retailer of parts to repair exercise equipment and works in association with FitnessRepairParts.com. Fitness Plus also has developed software for use in various areas of the fitness industry.

FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESSES

Thome Plumbing Company

Thomeplumbing.com

Generation of Ownership: 2nd

Founded: 1993

Thome Plumbing is a second-generation, family-owned plumbing company.

Thome Plumbing Company was founded by Alan Thome in 1993, with the goal of providing high-quality service at an affordable price. Alan's son, Matthew Thome, continues to offer that same quality of service and dedication to customers. The staff of qualified licensed plumbers offers a variety of services, from basement break ups and stack replacements to simple faucet and toilet repairs.

Urethane Roller

Urethanageroller.com

Generation of Ownership: 2nd Generation

Founded: 1969

Urethane Roller is a second-generation manufacturing company specializing in industrial rollers. The company offers products and services to a wide variety of industries, including steel mills, breweries, conveyor equipment manufacturers, box board manufacturers, and many more.

Wiegman Associates

Waidb.com

Generation of Ownership: 2nd Generation

Founded: 1995

Wiegman Associates is a mechanical contractor and national leader in designing and building HVAC projects. Since 1995, Wiegman has engineered and installed innovative, energy-saving and cost-efficient HVAC solutions, refrigeration systems and automation controls for clients from a wide range of industries—both commercial and industrial, including senior living, food and beverage distribution, warehouse, and healthcare companies.

Wilco Molding

Wilcomolding.com

Generation of Ownership: 4th

Founded: 1948

Wilco Molding offers plastic injection molding, machining and automation solutions to a variety of industries.

Founded by Stan Williams Jr. in 1948, the company began as a machine shop.



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Adam Calloway, Owner, Calloway Insurance, and Mike Zalman, Vice President - Commercial Lending, Meramec Valley Bank

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