

American Dreamer

Matt Gray at Renegade Wireline Services credits employees with business success

Behind every great business endeavor is the team of individuals who made it possible.

At Renegade Wireline Services, Matt Gray holds this to the highest esteem and gives his employees all the credit for what his business has become since its inception.

After leaving Gray Wireline in 2009, Matt decided to strike out on his own and create the business he envisioned where values were held to the highest priority.

Two months after leaving Gray Wireline, Matt and his partners had their first job in the northeastern portion of the United States.

“We started with two trucks in the northeast and ordered a third truck when we got there,” Matt said. “We started getting trucks in and everybody started coming to work and we began building Levelland.”

Gabe Coronado is one of the first guys who joined Matt at Renegade, followed shortly by Steve Villanueva. Steve Gray, Matt’s father, started Gray Wireline in 1983. Gabe, Matt and Steve Villanueva all previously worked for Steve Gray at Gray Wireline.

The business sold and Steve Gray, along with Matt’s older brother, signed non-compete clauses. However, Matt did not and was able to start his own business venture.

“Me and Randy Cassidy got together and decided we wanted to start our own business,” Matt said.

The business began growing organically as Steve Gray was able to join in 2010, spurring the business forward.

“Levelland, at its prime before the pandemic, we were probably up to nearly 30 trucks and 102 employees,” Matt said. “As a company, our peak was 630 employees.”

Matt said the key to the business’ growth was mostly timing, combined with the loyalty and dedication of the team members.

“We were really growing organically,” Matt said. “The people we were hiring is what was really making it grow. The work ethic that everybody took along with it, the examples that were set.”

Matt credits his father with inspiring him to work hard to provide for not only his own family, but for his employees’ families.

“We grew up with my dad who used to work day and night and my mom was so proud of my dad for doing it, we were so proud of my dad,” Matt said. “It’s the only way I knew how.” Matt said his father also showed him the values necessary to not only run a successful business, but to produce happy and loyal employees.



“I grew up in the business with my dad who started Gray Wireline in the 1970s, we were always around,” Matt said. “I always had it in the back of my mind to do something like Renegade.

“Just like everyone who works for us, we have a passion for what we do,” he continued. “It’s long hours and lots of driving, lots of time away from family. These guys have had to make sacrifices in their life and with their families, so the basic thing we wanted to provide was a good place to work.

“We do focus on the bottom line, but we’re not going to sacrifice high quality service and nice equipment for money,” Matt continued. “Above all, I want to take care of our people, which includes making sure they have nice equipment.”

Matt said when he was watching his father run a business, things were different than they are now with growth and expanding the business.

“Times were a lot different then, we didn’t have the opportunity to grow like we had toward the end of Gray Wireline and the start of Renegade,” Matt said. “We’ve done a real good

job of growing organically. It’s all about the simple idea that you want to elevate your employees’ lifestyle.

“It instills loyalty, a sense of pride and the American dream,” Matt said.

“It’s about coming up from nothing or not having much and working very hard to provide for your family and being able to give your kids more than you had. That’s the biggest success story of Renegade, it’s what we do and we try to do that for everyone who comes to work for us.”

Matt said that loyalty is instilled in his employees because of his and the company’s dedication to providing for their employees “We try to elevate people’s lifestyle, we’ll take a 21-year-old kid and take their lifestyle to a new level if they’re willing to put forth the effort,” Matt said.

**“It’s the
only way
I knew
how”**



That was the case with Klay Brock who is now a manager at the company. When he first started, about 10 years ago, Brock was just a kid who wanted a job.

“Klay ran the ranks through Renegade and he can run every tool we have,” Matt said.

Brock said he remembers coming to Matt, who “didn’t want to hire him.”

“I remember I walked in here and Matt told me if I got my CDL, he’d hire me,” Brock said. “Later that day, I went and got my CDL and I think he was a little surprised. He’s a man of his word and he kept it.”

Brock said as he was making his way through the ranks, Matt never hesitated

same reasons that Matt prides the company for, a quality place to work with a company that cares for its employees.

“I’ve been with Matt and his dad since 1998, it was something I’ve always done and knew it would fit my lifestyle,” Coronado said. “It’s the family aspect around here, the Grays are good people and they care about all of us,” Villanueva said.

Brock said another thing the company prides itself on is being the best wireline company there is.

“How we do everything, from our relationship with everybody who works here and the quality of work,” Brock said.

“It seems like it’s the same challenges, it’s trying to hire people and build and build and then when the market turns, then it’s trying to hold on to your people,” Matt said. “As soon as times get good, our objective is to prepare for the next downturn.”

When the most recent downturn happened, it impacted Renegade significantly where their employee total was cut by more than 50 percent, from 630 employees throughout the whole company to 224.

“We tried to hang on with everyone but there wasn’t going to be a way,” Matt said. “We all sat here and tried to decide who we could keep and who we couldn’t.

We didn’t have an HR department to come in here, it was these guys who had to tell people to go home and it was horrible.

“That was the worst thing I’ve ever been through at Renegade or Gray Wireline,” Matt said.

Now, the company has come back up to about 350 employees, which Matt is proud of, and says the company will continue to try and bring people back.

“That was everybody’s focus, trying to get everybody back,” Matt said “It’s almost impossible not to lay off during downturns in the oilfield, but we’ve always tried to hold on to our people.”

“I want people to be proud of where they work”

to offer advice and knowledge to help Brock learn.

“Matt and I developed a close friendship and he took a lot of extra time to help me out with any questions I ever had,” Brock said. “No matter what time of day it was, and it was usually in the middle of the night, he never minded explaining and passing on knowledge to me. To have him take the time away to help me and better me, that really meant a lot and it still means a lot.”

Steve Villanueva and Gabe Coronado said they joined Renegade for the

Matt said family is important to him, as well, especially knowing the time his employees have to spend away from their families for Renegade.

“I want people to be proud of where they work, I want them to be proud of their family members who work for Renegade,” Matt said. “That’s the kind of company I wanted to be a part of.”

Matt said it’s always challenging to run an oilfield business that values its employees in a market that can be unpredictable sometimes.



Matt points out that because Wireline Services are a more niche market inside the oilfield industry, it's interesting that after every downturn, the field seems to reinvent itself.

"It's a little different, a little more technology and there's always a change in the way it comes back, you never stop learning," Matt said. "It keeps it interesting, it's what keeps me interested."

Currently, Renegade has 14 locations throughout the United States, including Texas, Mississippi, New Mexico and Pennsylvania.

Matt credits everything about the success of Renegade back to his employees.

"The reason why we're here and why we're successful is because of our employees," Matt said. "We

are who we are because of our employees. I believe they are the face of Renegade, whether they're out in the community or on the job site."

Matt said Renegade values community involvement because it's about reaching out to those high school graduates who might not see a future at a four-year university and instead are ready to go to work.

"I want the kids in high school to know who Renegade is so those who go straight into the workforce and want to make something of themselves can come to us," Matt said. "We can push them along because I want to provide opportunities for people."

Today, Renegade continues its growth with

new technology, new locations and most of all, its employees and their involvement in the local community. "We're going to keep doing what a doing. So

much of our business is driven by our customer base. When they grow, we grow, and we just try to keep up the pace," Matt concluded.

