

LIFESTYLES

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Renegade wireline services in Andrews uses ESOP, family values to retain, recruit employees

By Kati Moody

True loyalty stems from faith and the employees at the Renegade district in Andrews never questioned their loyalty to the Gray family.

"We were all coming here regardless," said Boadie Hobbs, district manager. "We were just a call away."

When Renegade was founded in 2009, it wasn't long until it became evident the company needed other districts around the Permian Basin to support operations.

While it was just equipment at first, people were close behind. Most were former employees of the Gray family who worked at Gray Wireline before its sale.

"It took time," said David Gray, co-owner and board member at Renegade. "This is the heart of the Permian Basin; you want to be here."

Under Gray Wireline, David helped establish the district in Andrews. He brought in the people who could run the yard and understood the importance of having a presence near Midland and Odessa.

After the sale of Gray Wireline, David and his father Steve were in non-compete clauses for two years and couldn't do anything to assuage the situation for their former employees—yet.

"We were all just waiting," said Richard Flores, small line operations supervisor.

KJ Stanton, an account manager at Renegade in Andrews, said he was anxious to know what was happening behind the scenes, having been with the Gray family for a significant amount of time. He stayed at Gray Wireline after the sale but told his wife he had to do something different.

"I've never quit a job without finding another one and I told her I'm quitting this and I'll find something else to do," Stanton recounts. "Less than five minutes later, they called me and said 'Are you ready to help us do this again KJ?' That was the good Lord."

The managers in Andrews remember that there was never a question of if, but it was all about when.

"We were all anxious to come on board," Flores said.

The eagerness to return centered around the Gray family's reputation and dedication to their employees.

"There was a loyalty factor there," Flores said. "How they value their relationships in life correlates to how they run their business. We're not just numbers to them, every one of us knows that at the drop of a hat, they'll do whatever is necessary to help us through anything."

Stanton remembers a time when this couldn't have been truer. He was in a serious car accident two years ago that upended his way of life for a time, and still affects him now.

"I was in a coma for three and a half weeks and when I woke up, it dawned on me, and I asked my wife what we had been doing for a

paycheck," Stanton said. "She said you haven't missed a paycheck."

This dedication to the quality of life of their employees stems from the family's own values.

"We believe in what we're doing here, it's up to you to make it happen," Flores said. "That goes to the core values of the family and creating an elevated lifestyle. They want to elevate lifestyles. Anyone who comes to work here and believes in what we're selling can do that."

While their values never falter, the industry has changed over the past decade and in turn, operations at Andrews have had to change with it. When the Andrews district first came online, its "claim to fame" was staging work.

"We were top gun for a long time," David said.

Because of this, Renegade's success is closely linked to the work happening in Andrews. When Andrews is doing well, the entire company is having a good day.

"We're centrally located so everyone comes here to work," David said. "When Andrews does real good, we all do real good."

However, a combination of a volatile and saturated market has pushed the company to diversify products and services to ensure a stable workplace for employees. While the Andrews yard was known for its pump down service, at one point operating six trucks on a consistent basis, it has backed off.

"The more we evolve the more generations we can bring in to keep up with the everybody else out there," said Justin Foster, operations supervisor for the Renegade district in Andrews. "It really evolves around the team we have here, we have a great team of guys to help us all work together to make the company succeed."

David credits Foster, along with Troy Haislip, technical manager, and Kenny Thomas, an account manager, as assets to the company who have contributed to the district's ability to pivot away from pump down staging and into production work.

"The jobs are bigger for pump down, but there is more work in production," Haislip said. "Over the life of the well, the production side keeps going. There are wells out here older than I am. Production work is something very close to my heart."

Thomas says that he will always believe in the continued success of Renegade because while markets change and the industry evolves, the Gray family values remain consistent.

"The simple promises that have been made since the beginning have always come to fruition," Thomas said. "The promises that are easy to break anywhere else, they keep those promises. You work hard and you get opportunities."

Renegade is its own biggest competitor for jobs and profits. Engineers are encouraged to sell themselves and when another district has an engineer that does a better job, it



creates a friendly rivalry. But David points out that competition leads to improved performance.

"It makes the company as a whole better," David said.

Building the team at Andrews was easy because all the people were already there and ready to get to work. The challenge has been pulling from the existing workforce, an obstacle that all oilfield companies face, especially being in the Permian Basin.

"You have to bring younger guys in and show them the way instead of just picking from the work pool that's already out there," Flores said.

The belief is that once employees realize the type of company Renegade is and how they value employees, they won't want to work for anyone else. They become part of the family.

"It's generational, it's about how you get treated that impacts how you move forward," Flores said. "Everybody here changes your life."

An advantage for Renegade and its employees is the ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Program). David and the other board members at Renegade implemented

the program to transition ownership to the employees rather than putting them at risk of new owners.

"We're not for sale," David said. "It's something that's viable for generations. If you go to work for somebody else, you're for sale. At a moment's notice you could be a different company."

The location of the Andrews yard was more than just strategic for Renegade. It also provides a community for the employees to be involved in—not only a place to work, but a place to live.

"While we're still close to Midland and Odessa, it's a small community and a good place to raise kids with good schools," David said. "We stay involved because we want to support the community."

It's also important for the community to know that Renegade is a great place to work, along with the opportunities that it provides for its employees and their families. Some of the best employees found the company simply through word of mouth.

"It's a great place to work, my son works here, and he tells his friends about it, and they all see

the level of success he's having and they want a piece of the pie, too," Flores said. "We want to work with these guys, we would love for them to come to us with interest."

Flores is far from the only employee with family members working for the company. Stanton's family has three generations with Renegade, both David's sons work for the company, among others. This generational bond at Renegade continues

through the legacy that was built many years ago in classic West Texas fashion.

"It all started on the tailgate of a pick-up truck," Flores said.

David says that while setting the standard for excellence was easy, it's continuing that legacy that is the test of greatness.

"Building it was fun but maintaining that is where the real work comes in," David said.

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