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2008 Contractor of the Year

Residential Winner



2008 Contractor of the Year **Residential**

Outstanding Workmanship, Complete Customer Satisfaction

Academy Roofing Inc. Builds its Reputation One Roof at a Time

by Chris King

When Curt and Suzie Boyd formed Academy Roofing Inc. in Aurora, Colo., their objectives were simple but ambitious. “We started our company in 1980 and our goal then was to build a reputation as an honest and reliable company with an emphasis on outstanding workmanship and complete customer satisfaction,” said Curt Boyd, president of Academy Roofing Inc. “Today that goal is as important as ever.”

While the goal may be the same today, the company’s execution has been refined over the years. Suzie Boyd, Curt’s wife and the company’s vice president, points to a personal experience that forever changed her view of customer service. “Over the years I have talked to many customers before we began their roof,” she recalled. “Some of our customers seemed so worried about their projects. I had complete confidence in our ability to get the job done right, so it was hard for me to understand why the customer felt so nervous. It was not until we reroofed our own home that I gained a better understanding of our customers’ thinking.”

“Installing a good roof is just not enough,” she said. “We have to be there for our customers from start to finish. That’s what we do at Academy Roofing Inc. I think that’s what sets us apart from so many other companies. We want your job to go well. We want your roof to look beautiful and last for years. We want that antique clock in the dining room to still be in one piece. We want you to be satisfied. The foundation of our company now had three words — complete customer satisfaction. It’s the only way we know how to do business.”

It’s that commitment to quality workmanship and customer service that has earned Academy Roofing Inc. the distinction of being named *Roofing Contractor’s* 2008 Residential Contractor of the Year.

Company History

Academy Roofing Inc. handles new construction, roof replacement, roof repair, metal fabrication and seamless gutters. Seventy-five percent of the company’s business is residential, approximately 60 percent of it in new construction. It is a member of the National Roofing Contractors Association, the Western States

Roofing Contractors Association, and the Colorado Roofing Association, where Curt served two terms as president. The company has 115 employees.

Curt Boyd got his start in roofing while attending high school. “My mother was an administrator for a roofing company, and I worked there part time and on weekends while in high school and summers while in college,” he said. “I worked for another roofing contractor for four years before Suzie and I formed our own business.”

“It was a huge leap for us because we had three small children,” Suzie said. “Curt came home one day and said, ‘Look up some information on workers’ compensation — we’re starting our own business.’ And, after I picked myself up off the floor, we did it.”

The company started small. “We worked out of our home for two years,” she said.

Mother Nature helped give the fledgling business a boost. “There was a hailstorm the summer we started the business, and that little hailstorm helped us get started,” said Suzie, who numbered her mother’s house among the company’s first projects.

Marketing efforts were limited in the early years at Academy Roofing Inc. But



■ Curt and Suzie Boyd formed Academy Roofing Inc. in 1980. (Photos by Blue Talon Photography, Parker, Colo.)

mance of the employees at the jobsite that ensures quality work and customer satisfaction, according to Curt. “One of the keys is consistency of performance,” he said. “We are consistent in the time we show up every day, consistent in our commitment to quality work and consistent in safeguarding the customer’s home. It gives customers — and their neighbors — a comfort level and helps with our referral business.”

The Boyds have found that having employees come to the office instead of directly to the jobsite has several benefits. “It helps us adapt and send a wave of people over to a different project if needed,” said Suzie. “If there’s a deadline, we can move people quickly en masse.”

“It also provides a better avenue for training,” said Curt. “Most of our employees started at our company knowing zero about roofing. All they have learned about roofing has been taught the Academy way.”

Training and Education

New employees go through an orientation process where they learn company policies, safety and proper tool use. They are fitted for their safety equipment and instructed in how to properly put it on and take it off. When they are assigned to a crew, the foreman and the company’s safety director, who keep a close eye on the employee’s progress, train employees. After eight weeks, new employees must pass skill

Curt and Suzie soon realized that many of their reroof customers came to them from referrals. This fact only strengthened their resolve to provide “complete customer satisfaction.”

The relationships Curt had developed over the years soon led him into new construction. “We did a lot of production housing early on,” he said. “One of our biggest customers was Richmond Homes. We started with them during our first year in business, and they were a very good customer of ours. We really built our company based on that account.”

In 1986, the housing market went sour, and the company learned a key lesson the hard way. “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket,” said Curt. “We found out then that we had to diversify.”

It was a lesson that paid off in the last few years, as the housing market has entered another slump. “We saw this housing crash coming a few years ago,” said Suzie. “We learned a hard lesson in 1986 and we knew we needed to branch out into other kinds of work.”

Those areas include retirement housing, still strong in the Denver area, low-slope commercial roofing, gutters and downspouts, and repair work. “Repairs have been a growing segment as people are finding they don’t have the money for a reroof,” said Suzie.

Today, the company uses marketing tools

including a Web site (www.academyroofing-inc.com), mailers, and a prominent fleet of trucks, but it’s still referrals that are the greatest source of sales leads. “Word of mouth is our biggest asset,” Suzie said. “Even in the new construction arena, the builders talk. We’ve been given an opportunity to bid on many jobs from a builder referral.”

It All Begins With Employees

“When we go out and talk to the customer, we assure them that our employees are well trained,” said Curt. “We emphasize that they come to our office every morning and arrive at the jobsite in company trucks wearing company uniforms. We do pre-employment and random drug testing.”

It’s the perfor-



■ The staff of Academy Roofing poses for a photo behind owners Curt and Suzie Boyd.

tests in order to earn their first raise.

"When it comes to a quality installation, training is the most important thing," said Curt. "We have training sessions with our manufacturers and training in-house. We have a certain way we like things done, and we want to make sure our employees know that. We're sticklers about doing things the right way. We try hard to minimize any problems with our work and training is the only way to do that."

On the residential side, the company installs products by manufacturers including TAMKO, Owens Corning, GAF-Elk, Westile and Monier Lifetile. The company has installed Carlisle for the last two years on low-slope roofing. "The manufacturers have played an important part in our success," Curt added.

According to Curt, another key component in a successful roofing company is planning every job before that job starts. "The next crew might not be our best fit for the next job," said Suzie.

Safety Is the Top Priority

Academy Roofing Inc. has always emphasized safe work practices, and the company has had a full-time safety director since 1992. "I know how important it is to be a safety director," said Curt. "I used to be our safety director. Once we made it somebody's full-time job, the results were staggering. Our current safety director, David Taylor, grew up in the business — his father was a roofer — so he understands the importance of training, drug testing, and strict safety rules reinforced from the first day."

The company holds weekly tailgate talks on Monday mornings and monthly safety meetings with guest speakers, films and presentations, as well as jobsite safety meetings. "David is out in the field every day," Curt said. "He can't be at every jobsite, but he knows where the most critical ones are and he follows up. He also closely manages our worker's compensation claims, and that has been extremely helpful."

"Safety directors must have the support of the owners, and David knows he has

our support," said Curt. "The main motivation is to keep your people safe. While some people point to other benefits such as saving money on worker's comp premiums, our main motivation is to get the guys home safely every day."

Customer Care

"Customers are coming to us with more information about products than ever before," Suzie said. "They know a lot about shingles, and tile. But Suzie points to her own experience as a customer as proof that many don't know exactly what's involved in replacing a roof. We started our own reroofing project on a Saturday, and there were machines everywhere, men on the roof and all kinds of noise. I realized exactly what our customers go through," she said. "After that, we revised our entire process with reroofing customers."



■ Purchasing manager Tom Ritter makes sure the installers have what they need before they head into the field.

Reroofing contracts include a letter stating, "For a few days, your home will become a construction site." The company also provides information to customers about protecting their belongings, cars, pets and children.

"We try to educate homeowners about what they will go through," Suzie said. "This isn't like having a garbage disposal replaced; it's major construction. We do everything to protect the bushes, the patio furniture, and any belongings that can't be moved."

The Boyds try to view all aspects of the process from the customer's perspec-

tive. "Some companies use aggressive sales practices, but we don't," said Curt. "I don't like to be sold that way, so I won't do it. When you're selling items like nuts and bolts in a hardware store, the sale is the end of the process — the person buys the nuts and bolts and goes home. In roofing, you work hard to sell a job, but the real work hasn't even started. So you never want a customer to buy under duress. It just makes them harder to please. If they choose our company of their own free will, it just starts everything out on the right foot."

Repeat business and referrals also depend on prompt service if a problem does arise, so the company's warranty division is always ready if a repair call comes in. "If we put a roof on and you have a problem, we'll take care of it," said Curt.

Concluding Thoughts

"I think our business is a big business with a little business feel to it," said Suzie. "We know everyone who works here, and we have long-term employees that are just like family. We've met some wonderful people in this industry. We want the people in our office to be happy. We want the people in the field to be happy. We want the people we work for to be happy, and we want to be happy. And, for the most part, that happens. There are bumps in the road, but in the end, happiness has to be part of the equation."

In the company's main hallway, the Wall of Fame holds 28 pictures — the pictures are of employees who have worked for the company over 10 years. "We're proud of our work and our reputation, but that wall is something we look at every day and realize how important our fellow employees are to our company," said Suzie.

"Comparing a business to a family can be a cliché, but we want our employees to be secure and know we have their interest at heart," said Curt. 

Chris King is the editor of Roofing Contractor. He can be reached at 248-244-6497 or kingc@bnpmedia.com.