

PLUMBING CONTRACTOR

JAMES TERRY:



CONNECT
2017

DEDICATED TO SHARING THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY TO HELP OTHERS SUCCEED

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When James Terry was 14 years old, his father would drop him off at a house and put him to work with just a bucket and a few tools. It was the groundwork the third-generation plumber says was laid by his father and grandfather, and it has helped Terry achieve the success he's experiencing now.

"My dad was very, very old school," Terry says. "He was limited on tools, limited on resources, and kind of threw me in the fire very early on. I learned to be very efficient with everything limited. Now I have some of the best cameras and locating equipment you can buy.... Those processes then were so old school you had to think [outside the box]."

Paying it Forward

From those early learning days, Terry grew into a highly-successful, skilled plumber and, through the years, has dedicated his life to the profession. Today, at age 33, his focus is on helping others, on paying it forward. With that, he will be among the experts speaking at PHCC's CONNECT 2017. During his session, "Leveraging Technology to Right Size Your Business"—slated for Wednesday, Oct. 4—Terry will

share his philosophy on a business model that helped position his company—GreenTeam Service Corporation—among the fastest growing companies in America... one that is at the forefront of the industry movement toward leveraging technology to become more efficient with operations processes.

His path to that point is a story of extremes: "My dad is actually an ex-jockey, and every morning he would have the daily racing form from Gulf Stream and Calder [race course], and he would rip a corner off the newspaper and write down a name, a phone number and an address in the most illegible manner imaginable. He would hand it to me and say, 'Here, go do this call.'"

At age 16, Terry drove around Miami in a beat-up pick-up truck without air conditioning in "some of the worst neighborhoods and buildings in the

city," often lost for hours with a bad address or phone number.

Early experiences like those led him to the decision to take a leap of faith, strike out on his own and implement a business plan for GreenTeam Service Corporation that involves a knowledge of technology, efficiency, and a team concept.

Taking a Gamble

After leaving his dad's company and looking into an apprentice program, Terry began working for Nagelbush Mechanical in 2005. When the economy started to struggle a few years later, he was laid off, lost the house he was renting, and traded in his Nissan 300 ZX for an old cargo van.

In entrepreneurial spirit, he created his own business plan, which was rejected by several people, until he sat down with successful South Floridian Pat Kerney, who took him



James Terry (left) learned the business early from his father, Jim Terry III.



James Terry (left) has relied on technology to build his thriving business.



under his wing and helped him secure subcontracting work with several major hospitals. “Within the first two years I got some office buildings and added a few guys here and there, and things just started to take off,” Terry says.

Fast forward, and—in 2015 and 2016—his company, GreenTeam Service Corporation, was ranked among the INC 5000 fastest growing companies in America by *INC Magazine*.

Through the years, he’s restructured the business and today focuses strictly on plumbing and employs about 25 people.

In 2012, he explored additional growth opportunities, networking with building owners and corporate facility managers to enter what would be his largest vertical market, Class A office buildings. In that time, his company has taken over work in more than 100 commercial buildings, including “the biggest and baddest \$20-\$30-\$40-\$50-million dollar buildings in downtown Fort Lauderdale, Miami and West Palm Beach,” he says. Class A office offered a new

level of business, which could best be described as massive distribution: one client, thousands of square feet, and several buildings in one portfolio.

Technology is Magic

A large part of that success is rooted in technology, particularly in the areas of dispatch and communication software.

“I decided to go all-in on technology,” Terry says, including adopting reliable group messaging software so that his workers can see where the next job is and managers can manage projects by monitoring the group chat.

Using GroupMe, a mobile group messaging app from Microsoft, GreenTeam workers can share images, videos, documents and more about a job, and managers can collect input from others and actually see the work being completed live.

Terry explains that the program groups teams together and allows them to communicate with each other. By the time he gets out of bed at 6:00 a.m., he has workers on assignment already, so he can log into GroupMe and see what

is happening with each group, and his workers also can log in and see where things stand.

GroupMe also displays photos with a timeline, and Terry can tag individual people. Without making a single phone call, Terry can review a job and tag back with input or approval, which is invaluable with the volume of work being completed every day.

The technology allows Terry, as an owner, to attend important business meetings but also hit his phone and see what is going on for live updates on jobs. Questions are answered, and workers also can see—or get advice from others—to make sure jobs are done quickly and correctly.

GroupMe also offers a visual *record* on projects. For example, on one occasion after some work was completed, three floors of a building unfortunately flooded. Terry was able to review a time-stamped video and discovered it wasn’t the work that was at fault; it was a manufacturer’s defect.

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Seeking Perfection Pays Off

While Terry certainly takes pride in his work, he admits that his success stems from more than that, adding that it's about "not wanting to settle for being just another contractor and really wanting to set the bar high." As a result, his current customers include the University of Miami, several hospitals, and the Dade County school district in Miami, which includes more than 400 public schools.

"We are a 24-hour company," Terry says. "It is a 7-day-a-week deal." But while he built the business and has to *stay* on top of it, technology has helped him not have to *be* in it 24 hours a day.

In sharing his concepts with others, Blue Collar Business Consulting has become Terry's second passion project. The concept of trying to be the best is one that is paying off; Terry built a \$5 million/year company in five years. Now—through this consulting initiative—he's helping other business owners and entrepreneurs do the same thing with a "boots on the ground" approach.

In looking ahead, Terry predicts the industry evolving to the point where techs will have in their trucks devices similar to Alexa and Google Voice. "Imagine a tech being able to tell a device to pull inventory, process a work order, add time and notes to a job, or call the next work order if he/she is running behind or ahead of schedule," he says.

"It's going to change the game," predicts the man who already is doing just that. ●

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