

# 2018 Summit Award

## American Bath Group

"I was an old man by the age of 8, and I was serious about the pure-bred cattle industry at the age of 12." Rick Stonecipher and Texas A&M University both share strong roots in agriculture.



**B**orn and raised on a beef master cattle ranch, Stonecipher was exposed to the thrill of entrepreneurship at a young age. His father was an orthopedic surgeon and the farm was a side business and passion project. Stonecipher and his brother Scott began working on the ranch as young boys, and he contributes a lot of his success to the foundational teachings that the farm provided. "You can't get away from the basics; hard work and determination. It's how we were raised."

We talked a lot about fundamentals during our conversation in late October, about their importance and their universality. Stonecipher described a scene from the famous 1984 film *The Karate Kid*, in which Mr. Miyagi teaches young Daniel LaRusso the seemingly pointless skill of how to properly wax a car and repeats "wax on, wax off" at his frustrated pupil. He said this scene perfectly illustrates the importance of building a strong foundation for life and your company. "You have to use the fundamentals to build your foundation. It's not fun but it's important," said Stonecipher. This passion for building upon a strong foundation is a life lesson that he's used to turn a dying company into the first ever business to be recognized as a Summit award winner and Aggie 100 honoree within the same year. An accomplishment that is no small feat. It's difficult for companies to continue to see accelerated growth once they reach a certain level of revenue, but under the guidance of Rick Stonecipher American Bath Group has no indication of slowing down.

Rick Stonecipher graduated from Texas A&M in 1990 with a degree in Animal Science. After graduation he returned home to the family ranch where he raised and bred high-quality purebred beefmaster cattle. At the time, American Bath Group wasn't doing very well and his father's fel-

low investors had dropped out, leaving him with what was left of the company. So Stonecipher and his brother stepped in as CEO and COO. One might think this is a bold leap from agriculture to manufacturing, but when you've built a strong foundation and understand the fundamentals of business Stonecipher said that's all you need. "Raising cattle gave me a raw base. I had to do everything from the agronomy side to the marketing side. It's a long term business strategy." Stonecipher took the lessons he learned from cattle and used them to reinvigorate American Bath Group. "I don't like OK" Stonecipher commented, so he focused on developing a company that was centered on quality and their customers. American Bath Group believes that every person who comes in contact with their company should have an exceptional customer experience. Whether that's a contractor's accounting department paying an invoice or the homeowner who will be enjoying their quality products. "We have an entire team dedicated to customer experience. They work with every group in the company to make sure it's done right. It's not just a slogan for us."

This passion for their customer allowed American Bath Group to emerge from the 2007 housing crisis unscathed. "It was hard on everyone, but we kept our heads down and kept pushing" said Stonecipher. When the economy recovered after the crisis Stonecipher wanted American Bath Group to begin giving back to the community. After experiencing success during such a difficult time he felt that "as a company we have a fiduciary responsibility to do the right thing" and established American Bath Group Gives. Currently they support several non-profit organizations such as Shriners Hospital for Children, World Wildlife Foundation, and Wounded Warrior Project. Stonecipher mentioned how surprising it was when this new endeavor took off within the company and became

a "unifying cultural value," no small feat for a company that boasts 3,600 employees across 20 states and areas of Canada.

It's clear that Rick Stonecipher is one of those exemplary Aggies who takes the core values and implements them into his daily life; Excellence, Integrity, Selfless Service, Loyalty, Leadership, Respect. These are all words you can use to describe American Bath Group and Stonecipher. When asked about the impact that Texas A&M had on his life, he gave an answer we hear time again from our Aggie 100 honorees, "A&M's culture and people continue to have a positive influence on me and others. They help in your growth and development more so than what you learn in class."

By building a strong foundation based on fundamental principles Rick Stonecipher has built a company that will last, regardless of economic downturns or changes within the industry. His passion to never settle for "OK" and ability to seamlessly integrate the A&M core values into his company and life practices have allowed American Bath Group to become the first ever Aggie-owned or led business to make the Aggie 100 list and receive the Summit award. Wax on, wax off.



**Honoree:** Rick Stonecipher '90  
CEO

**Location:** Savannah, Tennessee

**Industry:** Manufacturing

**Founded:** 1993

**Average Revenue:** \$481,879,740