

As the largest electrical contractor in the state of Texas, it's no surprise that Walker Engineering is the 2019 Aggie 100 Summit Award recipient. Brent Walker, President of Walker Engineering, said that receiving the award was incredibly meaningful, "it's something we're very humbled by but also very proud of. We're really excited." Walker Engineering's portfolio ranges from museums to hospitals to corporate campuses, and even includes Texas A&M University's beloved Kyle Field. But Walker Engineering is more than a company, it's a family. Founded in 1981 by Charlie Walker the company is now led by his son Scott Walker '00 and nephew Brent Walker '97. "We've learned a lot over time, about what not to do to avoid making mistakes and our goal is to be the best partner we can for our collaborators and customers." Brent attributes the continued growth and success of Walker Engineering to Charlie's mentorship which has shaped both him and Scott as leaders and entrepreneurs. "[Charlie] taught us about the necessity of keeping our employees happy and motivated. Having good, talented folks around him was how he built his business." Charlie also taught them to prioritize and respect their employees. "The best leaders have a natural social awareness and empathy of others", said Brent. "When you have thousands of employees who are coming to work each day they each have their own things going on in their life. That can make them great at their job one day and maybe they struggle the next because they have something that's taxing their well-being. Being conscientious of that is something we learned from Charlie and something we try to continue to emulate today."

Although Walker Engineering is a family business Scott and Brent had to first prove themselves as employees before they could pursue a leadership role within the company. "It didn't matter that my last name was Walker" said Brent, "without question we had to earn our stripes. No one would have respected us if we were given the keys to the kingdom without earning them." Both Brent and Scott have worked for Walker since they were teenagers. "We started working in the warehouse when we were in High School. We were working on jobsites when we were in college. We were in the field, learning how hard it is to be an electrician. Without question the empathy I have for those in our field and our employees is because I've done their job and I understand that it's hard and challenging. Having to do that earned us the respect of our employees and in turn gave us respect for our employees." In total Brent has been working for Walker Engineering for 28 years and now as president he has a deep understanding of the mechanics of the company.

Brent comes from a family of proud Aggies and estimated that there must be over 30 Walkers who have graduated from Texas A&M throughout the years. "I grew up in a maroon household and I knew the Aggie War Hymn before Jesus Loves Me" he joked. Although Brent learned many things during his time as student in the department of construction science, one key lesson he gained from Texas A&M was that "you're going to have to

work hard to be successful." In addition, Walker Engineering tries to incorporate a bit of Texas A&M's culture within their own. "There's a family environment at A&M and we very much try to incorporate that into our own company." Peer-to-peer support and mentorship is a pervasive cultural aspect at Walker Engineering. They aim to create an environment where people enjoy coming to work. "Even though we've grown so big we try to continue to keep that small town family feel just like Texas A&M."

More than anything Brent stressed the value that Walker Engineering places on their people. "We are nothing without our employees" he said. "Finding folks who want to come in and work hard and rewarding that is what we're all about. We're not micromanagers. We hire people to do a great job and have great ideas. We very much like to recruit, train, and promote from within our company." They're trying to change the culture of their jobsites

as well. Gone are the old guard ways of running a site like a military operation. "We've tried to really promote a different mindset. We want young people to come into the trade and feel like they have a chance to succeed. You can share your wisdom without screaming at some poor kid." When asked what advice he would give to a leader who wants to develop a strong company culture, Brent emphasized the importance of hiring the right people. "Identify talent that organically has that mentality. You get a better environment of collaboration and long-term tenure when you have a family culture. There are a lot of folks who are smart and good at their jobs that we don't hire because they don't fit our culture. A lot of folks job hop and we look for

that. We want someone to be here for the long-term."

Walker Engineering is also dedicated to making an impact outside of the industry. "In every community where we build we owe it to be generous with our success." Walker Engineering is a charitable giver to many non-profit organizations including Joey's Dream Builders, Make a Wish, and March of Dimes. "When we have big fundraisers we involve our employees whether that's through volunteering or helping to raise money." As a company they're aware of the power that they have to be a force for good. "We want to continue to be a great place to work, provide for thousands of peoples families, and continue to build cool buildings." ♦

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Brent
Walker



Scott
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