

By Kate Cline

A Friendly Face

Utah company finds success with balance of water treatment & plumbing

When Daniel Scott got his start in the water industry a decade ago, a job with a plumbing company was simply that—a job. “To be completely honest, I needed a job at the time and I found a plumber who was hiring,” he said. “I found out that I loved it and was super good at it.” That job quickly blossomed into a career, and Scott gained experience working with both residential and commercial plumbing applications.

Scott also became involved with water treatment early in his career, learning about the many benefits of water filtration and softening, and

working with a variety of water quality issues, from hard water to contaminants such as sulfur, iron and heavy metals.

After years of working for bigger local plumbing companies, Scott partnered with Josh Christensen to start their own business, Friendly Plumber, last year in Sandy, Utah.

Since its opening, the business has been a booming success. The full-service plumbing company serves the Salt Lake City area, focusing primarily on the residential sector, which accounts for 90% to 95% of its business. Water treatment makes up 25% to 30% of the business, with general plumbing accounting for the remainder.

The biggest water quality issue in the area is hard water, with hardness levels reaching 40 grains per gal or more in several of the towns the company serves. “If [residents] don’t have some sort of softening system in place, they see the effects on their plumbing fixtures,” Scott said. He noted that high iron also is an issue in portions of the service area, leading to staining on plumbing fixtures.

Happy Employees, Happy Customers

According to Scott, the economy is booming in the Salt Lake City area, which is both good and bad news for Friendly Plumber. “We have so much work that we can’t support it all,” he said. “As a new business, we don’t have enough people to support the customer base.” The company currently has six employees, and is looking to hire more, but Scott noted that staffing has been its “biggest stumbling block” so far.

Employees are key to the company’s strategy—Scott’s philosophy is that happy employees lead to happy customers. “It starts with our employees—as long as our employees are happy, and they’re presentable ... it makes the company look good,” he said.

To keep employees happy, Scott’s top priority is to ensure that they are making a living through good pay. He also ensures that any tools they may need are available to them, and that all needs, from company vehicles to product literature to uniforms, are taken care of—allowing the employees to focus on taking care of customers.

“We get one chance [in front of customers]—and now we’re really good friends with some of them,” he said, explaining that the company has many repeat customers who continue to call Friendly Plumber whenever they have a plumbing or water filtration need.



Scott (left) and Christensen (right) founded Friendly Plumber last year. The company has found success as a new business, and is looking to hire more employees to keep up with demand.



Up for Review

To stay on the forefront of customers' minds, Friendly Plumber relies heavily on the Web. In addition to maintaining its own website, the company has pioneered a presence on a variety of social media outlets, especially Facebook.

Although social media outlets do not provide direct leads, Scott has found them valuable for creating brand awareness and name recognition. His primary goal when it comes to social media, he said, is to earn reviews—currently, the company has several dozen reviews on Facebook alone, garnering it a five-star rating. "Customers are looking for companies that have reviews to back their names," he said.

One outlet that has helped the company with direct leads is membership in Business Networking Intl., a worldwide networking organization. According to Scott, the local chapter has about 35 members. The members are able to get to know one another, enabling them to funnel business to other members' areas of trade. Membership in the organization has been beneficial—approximately 20% of the company's

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business in May came from leads from the chapter, Scott said.

High-Quality Future

Scott sees big things in Friendly Plumber's future—in fact, in the next five years, he hopes that it will be a major contender in the Salt Lake City area in both the water treatment and plumbing sectors.

Success will be aided by the fact that the public is much more in tune with water quality issues today. "It seems like there's a lot more awareness, particularly [about] hard water," he said. "People are grasping that they have to have some kind of softening system."

He advises any plumbing company to get involved in water treatment. "I think water filtration is just going to grow and get bigger," he said, explaining that the increased public awareness will fuel the industry. "I truly feel that all water is not created equal." **WQP**

Kate Cline is managing editor of WQP. Cline can be reached at kcline@sgcmail.com or 847.391.1007.



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