



5 LESSONS LEARNED IN THE COMMERCIAL ROOFING INDUSTRY

By Rod Petrick
*Owner and President
Ridgeworth Roofing Company*

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This summer, I celebrate 45 years in this industry. That's nearly a half-century of learning—I can barely believe it myself. From developing technical expertise and the skills necessary to run a successful business, to taking on industry leadership roles and charitable projects, I've learned some important life lessons in that time. These are the biggest ones.

1. ROOFING GETS IN YOUR BLOOD.

I was born into this industry. My father, Robert Petrick, started Ridgeworth Roofing in 1974. I grew up watching him demonstrate the right way to treat employees and customers, the correct techniques for certain types of roof applications, how to put together a successful bid for a job. At the beginning I thought I'd help my dad start the business and then move on to something else. But once I got involved, I never doubted for a second my decision to become a commercial roofer.

I have seen that same conviction in people who come to the industry on their own, without the influence of family members. And that's because roofing gets in your blood. I've seen people leave the industry, but they always come back. I think they feel what I feel: I am proud to be part of this community. I've made lifelong friends, many of whom have become like family. I have friendly competitors who are actually friendly—people my wife and I have gotten to know well, people who believe in the good of this industry just as much as I do. We help each other in challenging times and share stories and advice. As my dad used to tell me, "If you can't have friends, it's not worth being in it." Roofing is worth it.

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2. NOTHING BEATS GIVING BACK.

My dad taught me a lot of important lessons about this industry, but perhaps the most important of all was about giving back. Roofing has been very good to me and my family. We're fortunate to make a good living, and we look for ways to give back to people who may not be as fortunate. We can, so we do.

Ridgeworth gives away at least one roof each year to a charitable project: materials, supplies, and labor. Most recently, we were able to donate a roof to the high school that my dad and I attended. It feels good to have made an impact doing something we love to do. If you're able to, give back. You'll never regret it.

3. ALWAYS PUT PEOPLE FIRST.

Ridgeworth is a family business, and the family extends beyond blood relatives. I make sure to get to know our employees and their families as well. Knowing who you're working with helps keep them top of mind, right where they should be.

The worst day of my life was the day we lost a member of our team to a fatal jobsite accident.

I remember it like it happened yesterday, and it changed the way I look at our operations each and every day. The safety of our crew is my top priority. These people are our family. Without them, we wouldn't have a business. Each one of them is important, and I do my best to make sure they know it through what I say, how I say it, and the decisions I make. We work hard to ensure their safety, because the people who make up a business are what matter most.

4. ENJOY WHAT YOU DO.

Whatever it is you choose to do with your life, make sure it's something you enjoy. As the saying goes, if you like what you are doing, you will never work a day in your life. This has proven so true for me. I take genuine pleasure in our business, in interacting with customers and helping solve problems that our team is uniquely qualified to solve. I love making things happen for other people, and we're able to do that on a regular basis in commercial roofing.

Pursue a career that brings you joy. I believe that my love of my work makes me even better at it, and I think that's true in whatever you do. If you wake up each morning looking forward to getting started, it won't feel like work—and your enthusiasm for it might even be contagious.

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5. BE THERE FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS.

You can't have a business without customers. At the bare minimum, answer their calls, value their time, and solve their problems whenever you're able. But you can also take the time to really hear their concerns, answer their questions, and clearly explain your plans and processes, so they can then explain them to others. If they have a problem you can't solve, point them in the direction of someone else who can help.

There's a lot to be said about the human side of business. Listen to what your customers have to say. Have patience. Be kind, courteous, and respectful. It'll pay off in the long run, as you'll earn their respect and their recommendation—and feel good about the work you've done at the end of the day.

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ABOUT ROD PETRICK:

Rod Petrick, inspired by his parents' dedication to quality and service, joined the family business in 1975 after graduating from St. Rita High School. Rod began as a Roofers Local #11 apprentice, worked as a journeyman, and later, as a graduate of the "School of Roofology," took the reins from his father and became President and Owner in 2003. Rod is an expert in his field and has served leadership roles in the Chicago Roofing Contractors Association (CRCA) and the Midwest Roofing Contractors Association (MRCA). Rod started his one-year term as Chairman of the Board of the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) on June 1, 2020.



(708) 598-0039 | ridgeworthroofing.com