

APSE Conversations: Meet Wade (MN)!

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Hi this is Julie Christensen with APSE. We're excited to launch the APSE employment first employment for all podcast as a new way to connect with you. This podcast is a way to provide updates, real time advocacy alerts and information related to all things Employment First, be sure to subscribe so you don't miss an episode, and thanks for listening.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Welcome to another episode from APSE National. We are again meeting with another person with a disability who has found employment to talk about their kind of journey and their path towards finding a job that was a great fit. So, again it is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and we're trying to highlight folks that have found success with employment so today I have Wade with me, and Wade has been going back and forth with me for a few months now to get a time so we finally have a time to chat. I'm very excited. And wait, do you mind introducing yourself and letting your listeners know kind of where you live and who you are.

Wade Spencer

Yeah, my name is Wade Spencer, live in the Dakota county.

Erica Belois-Pacer

And Wade what state do you live in?

Wade Spencer

I live in Minnesota.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Okay. We've had folks out from all different states. So far this month so just like to do a shout out for what state you're in. Do you mind telling us a little bit about yourself and kind of what you're doing now and maybe what you've done in the past?

Wade Spencer

Well in the past... I don't know if people are familiar with and I worked at a restaurant for three years. I am now self employed, I've been doing that since 1997. I got involved in that with my father, before I opened my business. And now I sold all my work I have disabilities like, I basically, that's where I'm at with my business right now.

Erica Belois-Pacer

So wait, I think I know a little bit about your business but it would be great. Do you mind sharing what kind of business you have?

Wade Spencer

I am running a handyman company. We do improvements on houses. As of right now it's terraced houses the can be remodeled not doing new construction. We do a variety of different things on houses ranging from windows, doors to vinyl siding, roofing, some drywall. I don't know my list in front of me I think we do some gutter installing some gutter cleaning we do a lot of variety of things that we do have. I do have somebody here with me. Just to let you know, star. She is the office manager so she is also here with me as well.

Erica Belois-Pacer

That's awesome. Um, so my dad actually used to own his own business and was a roofer and did remodeling and similar things as well. So I am familiar with kind of the amount of time, I'm sure you're putting in in terms of scheduling and estimates and all that fun stuff. Plus just, you know, it's, there's a lot of technical things that go into remodeling so how did you first kind of establish your, your business?

Wade Spencer

Well I established it when, my dad was sick at one point, and I decided, me and my father talked it was decided to branch out on my own, tried to make a living at it that way in which, I'd have been successful doing it. That's where I decided to branch out was with my father's advice. And that's where I got into hiring. I don't want to hit people with disabilities. And I again I'm not gonna say what they have, but I have four sons right now that are working for me they're all females that all have some type of disability, that I brought on board. It's great.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Um, so just out of curiosity, was the... Did your dad do similar things?

Wade Spencer

My dad owned his own business. He did more of the remodeling but he did more of the drywall aspect, mostly drywall, but other things as well. I do more. A lot of everything I do more of vinyl siding than anything, but I do have a range of things from boarding passes to getting policies to. I do a lot of different things out there that keeps me busy and also my crews, as well.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Yeah, it sounds like so you have I know that you said you have subcontractors I think and you know folks that work for you. So you still are out there doing some of that physical labor as well?

Wade Spencer

Very rarely. I basically do a lot of the technical aspects of it, doing some of the paperwork, doing the estimates, dealing with customers that are either happy or unhappy. I do a lot of the

technical aspects of it. Occasionally I will be out there but there is a lot of times, I'm not out there I'm going from job to job to do estimates, You know, different things like that. Yes, I'm not I'm not alone and field as much as I used to.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Well, that's probably okay. Sounds like you're doing what you enjoy doing so that's great. On her, so wait when you were, I guess, Maybe in high school or, you know, out of high school. Did you think that you would go this route, or did you do any specific training in this field.

Wade Spencer

I went through. I don't remember the name of the college, they changed it so many times it used to be north, northeast Metro Tech up in White Bear or Oakdale, there on century. Now I believe it's 916? Out in Oakdale, MN. We did a lot of our training there is where we did a lot of our training as well it was on. It was, hands on, and that's kind of where we also did it as well. So I did have a lot of training on top of that I was trained by my father as well in some areas.

Erica Belois-Pacer

It's great I'm you know I'm always wondering. I used to do some trading for schools and actions for students that might not be going straight to college, you know, really encouraging. Some of that technical training because, You know, there's so many jobs out there that you can make a great wage you can make a great living. But sometimes people don't always think about it so?

Wade Spencer

We've also done some of the training through goodwill Easterseals here in Minnesota as well, they have the construction type deal was a little different construction type they wanted us to build things technically under my business. I can't build houses. So that's technically I had to. After I went to that training. I do have that but I can't act technically build houses, I can only remodel.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Yep, there's so many different certifications and permits. Yep, I, I am aware of all that fun so wait for our listeners do you have any advice or anything you'd like to share with them in terms of, I guess pursuing what you wanted to do, I'm guessing that the job at the restaurant. You had many years ago was not what you wanted to do for the rest of your life was okay.

Wade Spencer

At the beginning, financially, and I don't like to use the word, but it just doesn't wasn't paying the bills. So that's kind of another area why I decided to go out into the field that I'm in now, because I set my wage, I set what I charge, I have my wages that I said to a wage that I shouldn't be playing I have more what I charge but I keep it at a reasonable so I can get more customers, so that's why I keep my way to where it's at now. My advice would be this, go after your dreams for one for to some people and I don't I don't want to come across this doing that saying this the wrong way. I've had the experience of some people not wanting to hire people with, I guess, disabilities. I do not discriminate on my company at all, everyone gets a fair shake.

When I took these phoron. I sat down with all forum and I said I do hire people with disabilities, and everybody should have a fair shake. I simply do everybody a 30 day trial. They do good on the 30 days they get a 90 day trial after 90 days. They are then on board for good. I will not fire or terminate anyone that has a disability. If they have a job coach or a, I don't know what to call them case caseworker I believe me and the caseworkers will deal with them. So that's my advice, I guess, to give everybody a shared fair shake. I don't want to say the companies that I've tried to work for that. Don't give people with disabilities. I have a traumatic brain injury at like I say every will every disability that I have. I have a learning disability. So that's my advice to everyone.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Nope, I think that's definitely very valuable and you're, you're definitely very sensitive to things that you say, weighed so thank you. And that everybody is comfortable disclosing you know that they have a disability and I think that there's lots of folks out there that you know have a hidden disability so you really never know what someone is going through and I think you know what you're saying is you know, you give everybody a chance, which is amazing, and just, you know, see where people can take it so. Sounds great. So, Um, just before we have off today. Wade, what are your plans for the future?

Wade Spencer

Well, I'm planning for the future is to continue my business, and continue to provide the best service I can't for what my goal so in the future is to continue to bring more on people that have disabilities. I don't know when that'll happen, but my goal is to bring on maybe one or two here in the next six months that have disabilities, and continue to do that up to a certain amount. When I reach that certain amount I feel that I can't bring any more on, then I stop. So that's, that's kind of my future. To keep going that route, and also be able to communicate with those that have the disability better, because I was my brain entry I don't, I don't use the word, I don't communicate the greatest with them, it's kind of a learning process for me to communicate with certain, certain ones, but I do it. So that's my again, my goal and that's my long term goal.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Oh, that sounds great. So Wade, I don't think you are alone in the communication. I think whether that if you have a disability or you vote not everybody is perfect at communicating, and vice versa, I think, you know, it takes time to get used to how perhaps the folks that are working for you communicate best as well so don't think, I think that's kind of a universal thing in terms of learning how to communicate with people so I'm sure you are doing a great job.

Wade Spencer

Thank you.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Okay, well thanks again Wade for joining us today, and I definitely wish you luck in, you know, growing your business hiring more folks to be part of your team. I was gonna say are you planning for any retirement, but it doesn't sound like that's in your near future so.

Wade Spencer

No, ... me because of the way I am, because of the way I was taught, my goal was not to retire.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Well, I think I'm in the same boat as you because my.

Wade Spencer

I want to I want to work until I shouldn't really say it, I can't work to tell you today. I was raised by my father. That's kind of the way I want to do it, do it, so are his friends boys.

Erica Belois-Pacer

So your dad sounds a lot like my so I'm in the same boat. And I do often say that so it's good to keep busy and I think you know, is your personalities. It is hard to just think about stopping. So rise, absolutely well thanks again and I hope that you hope you don't have too busy of a day.

Wade Spencer

No it's kind of gonna be a slow day because of where I'm at, so.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Well, I am happy that I finally got to talk to you and feel free to share this podcast with anyone you would like, Wade.

Wade Spencer

Alright, thank you.

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