

Dan Hedger

DeBary, Florida



[Cornerstone Fabrication, LLC](#)

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Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Dan Hedger:

Obtained in 2009, Cornerstone Fabrication was reformed by company CEO Jim Hedger Jr. who had strong roots in company expansion. In the 80's, with the backing of his father, Jim helped grow Magnum Venus Products into a \$50 million per year company. From there, Jim had a strong desire to venture off on his own and, as partial payment for parting ways with Magnum, he took the reins of Cornerstone Fabrication where he and his son, Dan Hedger, built an independent company that they formed from a small endangered company.

Dan Hedger, current President of Cornerstone Fabrication, shared the Cornerstone Fabrication journey and how he came to be President of the company. "I've been involved since day one," he said. "I've done pretty much everything in the shop, from welding to running pre-fab, to sales

and now President. When we carved out Cornerstone and made it its own independent company, we started off doing a lot of Department of Transportation work. It's steady work, but the wait time to get paid is very long and the struggle to make a profit while still being the lowest bidder is an even bigger hurdle. Eventually, we refocused and went after OEM products."

After breaking off from Magnum, Cornerstone relocated from Tavares, FL to Debary, FL and purchased a sprawling 70,000 square foot facility including three separate warehouses. As Dan shared, it was a challenging time to take over a new company. The recession was gripping the nation and Cornerstone had to do everything in its power to make sure employees were paid and things were moving in a positive direction. Eventually the economy recovered, and Cornerstone Fabrication had made it through with their heads above water. They were poised for new growth and new opportunities and they were confident that now they could succeed.

Setting themselves apart from the competition

Dan shared more about the company, the value they bring to their customers and how they set themselves apart from their competition. "First of all, we're a Christian company," he said. "Everything we do, we do to glorify God. In terms of what we do; we're a full-scale steel fabrication shop producing products for OEM manufacturers. Thanks to the incredible efforts of our new salesman, Marshall Puckett, we've grown significantly over the last three years. In fact, our sales have doubled over the last two years. This has given us the opportunity to purchase new equipment including, two new lasers, valued at \$750,000

a piece, a new brake press, a new saw, four new forklifts, a new fleet of trucks and a big rig with a 52-foot flat bed. Until recently, we've only been utilizing 30,000 of our total 70,000 square feet. Because of our rapid growth, we've outfitted our second building to be our fabrication department and the original building will house our pre-fab machines, used to produce parts. As a result, we're set to double our capacity."

Dan continued, "In terms of competitive edge, we have excellent lead teams, compared to similar companies, and we have a great in-house engineer who is typically able to convert drawings without a charge. We also pride ourselves on our exceptional Quality Control Department. Everything that leaves our facility is of the highest possible quality."

With a staff of 32 employees and expectations of doubling that in the coming years, Cornerstone is confidently positioning itself for even more future growth. The company is very employee centered and continues to promote and excel within. Dan and his team also recognize the importance of bringing employees together, striving for positive teamwork and a copasetic work environment. On the last Thursday of the month, they bring everyone together for a "thank-you" lunch. They also promote self-betterment and pay for employees to go to machine school and other areas of job-related education, knowing this encourages employees to strive to be their best selves and promotes an even stronger bond between the company and the individuals who keep it running.

Giving back to the community

Cornerstone Fabrication is also heavily involved in the local community and believes in giving back their time and resources to worthy causes.

They donate approximately 10% of their profits to organizations in need, especially focusing on women and children foundations. This year, Cornerstone Fabrication is the main sponsor for the charity golf tournament, Birdies and Bogies, organized by the Junior Service League of DeLand where their generous donations are providing brighter futures for children directly located in this community.

Dan shared his thoughts on doing business in Florida and how Cornerstone plans to partner with local schools. "Florida is seeing a tremendous amount of growth," he said. "More people move to Florida on a yearly basis than most other states. It's a great place to do business and gives us access to a solid workforce. In terms of partnerships with local schools, we've recently reached out to Daytona State College to start a work opportunity to their new trade school graduates. We've done the same with one of the local high schools. It's a great way for us to obtain new talent and for the young people that we recruit, we're providing them with a solid job, an honest wage and an environment that sets them up for success by giving them opportunities to improve their skills."

What it means to be a Florida Companies to Watch Honoree

"We're very honored," he said. "We're here doing what we do, day in and day out, and for our efforts to be recognized is very cool. We're excited to see how the whole process unfolds. We're planning on hanging the banner, putting the announcement on our website and sharing it with as many people as possible.

"In terms of why we were selected, I think it has a lot to do with our insane growth in the past two years and our name getting out as a

company that gives back. People sees those gains and take notice. Our new salesman went out and acquired some key companies and also worked with existing clients to maximize our offerings with them. We also have great relationships with our vendors. One is, Scott Bradley, with Wells Fargo in Orange City, who I'd like to thank for the honor."

Looking ahead, Dan sees a future full of endless opportunities. He's hoping to set up smaller shops throughout the Southeast to expand their footprint and production capabilities. According to Dan, Cornerstone will continue to do what they do best, laser cut and bend. The entire team at Cornerstone Fabrication is extremely excited to see where things go.

Advice for aspiring entrepreneurs

Dan offers up some great advice for aspiring entrepreneurs looking to take the plunge into small business ownership. "Look at every angle before you pull the trigger," he said. "If you've looked and everything is saying go, you have to go for it. Right now is a great time for anyone to do that. Wages are high, people have money in the bank and its easier to get a job. If you fail, you can quickly get back into the workforce. There are lots of opportunities out there and you don't want to miss the one that could set you apart and start something amazing."

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