



up close *and personal with*
Brothers Home Improvement Inc.

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BY MICHELE PIAZZONI

At the heart of Brothers Home Improvement Inc. is family. The company attributes its success to a strong family philosophy that has guided and allowed Brothers Home Improvement to remain consistently profitable throughout the ups and downs of replacement window industry cycles for over a decade. In fact, the company was named after the relationship between the two founding members: brothers Ralph and Gene Cavanna. Today, seven out of the nine Cavanna siblings work for the business, as well as a handful of in-laws and a healthy sprinkling of second-generation relatives. Of course, the fact that roughly 15% of the company's 160+ employees are related does not single-handedly account for the company's rising success in the retrofit window industry, but it has definitely played a role. It was family, after all, who early on encouraged the brothers to continue their entrepreneurial plan even when the future wasn't crystal clear.

It all started in San Jose in 1994 when the brothers decided to open the company. The focus was originally placed on a window installation-only service. Ralph had years of experience in the industry, and Gene left his position as a senior manager of operations with FedEx to pursue the venture.



Left to Right: Steve Fender, Regional Vice President/Operations, Ralph Cavanna, Chief Operating Officer, Michael Cavanna, Sr. Vice President/Sales & Gene Cavanna, President/C.E.O.

“It wasn’t long before we realized that in order for the business to thrive, we needed to assist customers with the whole window replacement experience,” Gene recalls. So the brothers formulated a whole new strategy for success.

With this new vision, the pair decided to open a second location in 1996 in Roseville, where Gene made his home, while Ralph continued to reside near the San Jose location. Along with a commitment to staying on the cutting edge and providing customers with the whole window replacement experience, they began offering topnotch window and patio door products to pair with their already topnotch installation service. Their new business plan relied heavily on in-home sales appointments, complete customer satisfaction, and a growing referral base.

As it began to take a foothold in both market areas, Gene and Ralph enticed numerous trusted family members to join the growing business. Brother Mike left his career with Apple to become Vice President of Sales, brother-in-law Steve Fender became Regional Vice President of Operations, sister Rocio took on the responsibilities of Director of Marketing, while sisters Asun, Marisa and Rosa, were appointed Directors of Administration, Purchasing and Manager of Receivables, respectively. Within just a few years the company established itself in markets throughout the state including San Diego, East Bay, Los Angeles, Orange County and the Peninsula, and they centralized corporate functions into their Roseville office. Today, Gene’s son Michael serves as a Regional Vice President of Southern California, and his daughter Angel handles accounting for the manufacturing plant. And that’s just to name a few of the family members involved in the business.

“There’s a special reward that comes with being able to give your niece or nephew a good experience on their first job,” says Gene. “They can come in here and learn different departments. It allows them to better see what their calling in life might be.”



Just as the company has been able to deftly place each member of the family into a position that takes advantage of his or her individual skills and talents, Brothers Home Improvement has been keenly perceptive to emerging opportunities in the retrofit window industry, as well. In 2003, the biggest leap for the company was the opening of their own manufacturing plant in Sparks, Nevada, and the introduction of an exclusive product line designed and engineered specifically for

“Building on our relationships with a consumer-focused approach along with a continual product innovation allows us to stay a step ahead of competition. We deliver our vision every day and are driven by the deep-rooted value of commitment. Our clients count on it.”

California homeowners - The Brothers’ California Series vinyl replacement windows and patio doors.

“The design alone was a huge task,” explains Gene. “We wanted to come up with a window that would be the best window for this market.”

After developing the product line, the company opened the 35,000 square foot manufacturing plant from scratch. Today the plant produces about 150 units per day, accounting for about 90% of the windows the company sells. (They do carry other brands.) And the company has remained true to their direct sales marketing plan.

“We’ve always taken pride in the fact that we’re an all-employee company. Without subcontractors we have control over the quality of our service,” says Gene. “And most importantly, we have control over the quality of our product, as well.”



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The new California series window provides some of the best numbers available for solar heat gain in the summer and U-values in the winter. Amazingly, all residential windows manufactured by Brothers Home Improvement achieved commercial structural ratings when tested by AAMA, ensuring longevity in the products along with competitive prices resulting from manufacturing, sales and installation all by the same company. No middleman. Brothers Home Improvement offers written lifetime warranties on their products.

So what's ahead for this growing company? Gene says, "Building on our relationships with a consumer-focused approach along with a continual product innovation allows us to stay a step ahead of competition.



Some of the staff at the manufacturing plant

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To that end, making its debut in early fall is the Brothers signature disappearing screen, which will provide homeowners with windows that have a visual impact highlighted by screens that are convenient and have lasting beauty that will be truly hard to match. Other future plans include expanding the current plant and opening additional retail locations in California, as well as one near the plant in Nevada. And, of course, you can count on the fact that as the business continues to grow, undoubtedly so will the family involvement.

Replacement windows are one of the top ways to increase the energy efficiency of a home. If you would like to know more about replacement windows and patio doors call Brothers Home Improvement Inc. at (800) 672-3777 to schedule a convenient in-home consultation or stop by the corporate showroom located at 2510 Douglas Blvd in Roseville. ❖

BROTHERS

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