



THE FAMILY RECIPE FOR SUCCESS IS PEOPLE

BBWI Investments & Southern Partner's Owner and Partner, James "Bubba" Irwin, Jr.; Director of Operations, Chaz Wester; and Owner and Partner, James "Ricky" Bagwell in front of one of their 23 Sonic Drive-In locations

HOW ONE FAMILY BUSINESS GREW TO EMPLOY THREE GENERATIONS OF SONIC DRIVE-IN WORKERS

He didn't know it at the time, but the first burger 12-year-old Ricky Bagwell flipped in Greenwood, Miss. would be the start of something big—a family business spanning three generations and providing careers for more than 2,200 employees.

Just like he remembers that first burger, Bagwell still remembers the Sunday

afternoon in 1974 when his father went to visit a friend and came back that same day as a general manager of a Sonic Drive-In. Since that day, that family business has grown steadily throughout the years.

Today, they own and operate 23 Sonic Drive-Ins in the southern region. And while their footprint has grown, they're still rooted and headquartered in Greenwood.

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“I worked in and out of different Sonics all through high school,” said Bagwell, now President of BBWI Investments and Southern Partners—both companies are independent franchisees of Sonic Corp, Inc. After graduating, Bagwell had no plans to work at another Sonic. Instead, he went to Mississippi State University and majored in accounting, planning to work far away from burgers and fries. But while Bagwell might have believed he was “done,” it was obvious that God had a different plan.

“My dad needed me to fill a temporary vacancy for a general manager position,” said Bagwell. “Since I’d been around Sonics my entire life, he only needed to show me a few things before he left. Thirty-four years later, it’s a running joke that I’m still waiting on my replacement to come so that I can go on with my life.”

Although Bagwell jokes about being a permanent, temporary manager, it is no secret that he and his partners have had a tremendous impact on the business. “A few years before my dad died in 2006, I started more of the operational side of the business with my two brothers-in-law,” said Bagwell. At the time, they were operating 12 drive-ins. Every year since his father’s death, Bagwell and his partners have either opened or acquired at least one or two drive-ins.

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With three generations of Bagwells working at the company, every day has been rewarding. “When you love the people you work with and they also happen to be family, that’s the recipe for success,” said Bagwell. For Bagwell success is knowing that his family, partners, and employees are happy, faith-filled, and living the American dream.

“Besides our family, we have people that have been here since the beginning,” said Bagwell. More than half of their employees have been with them for more than 20 years. “We have been blessed with loyal team members, and that is what I owe our success to.”

Although Bagwell’s day-to-day has significantly changed from flipping burgers, to being a general manager, to now owning and overseeing the property side of the business, he always places an emphasis and a core company value on their faith in God each and every day.

“We would not be here without Him. We believe He is at the heart of our business and that we are all part of His plan,” he says.

Bagwell considers this an important value in his employees, especially with his general managers. “We have a company-wide retreat every summer with motivational talks to get everyone inspired.” And when it comes to instilling the same values in future employees he may not get to know personally, Bagwell has a favorite anecdote:

“There are people who are interested and then there are those who are dedicated. Those that are interested will do what needs to be done to get by and only if it’s convenient for them. Those that are dedicated are willing to do anything and everything to make sure the job is done right.”



Today, Sonic Drive-Ins have over 100,000 drink combinations and as many as 28 different types of shakes.



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It is Bagwell's hope that every new hire is not only interested, but dedicated. To help further both those values in his employees, Bagwell leaves a copy of Og Mandino's *The Greatest Salesman in the World* in every Sonic location so that his employees can read it and be inspired to do good work.

Bagwell feels that although there might be cheaper workers' comp carriers available, he has never considered changing carriers because LUBA has proven that they're in it for the long haul.

Dedication from employees keeps the business successful, but the company first needs to provide a safe environment for the employees to do their best work. "There are a lot of slips, trips, and falls in our line of

work," said Bagwell. "Every year we work with our LUBA loss control consultant, Scott Anderson, to go around the stores to show us what we can do to improve. Our results have improved as a direct result of his help."

Bagwell feels that although there might be cheaper workers' comp carriers available, he has never considered changing carriers because LUBA has proven that they're in it for the long haul. "It's their dedication to workplace safety that has allowed us to cut down claims each and every year since being a policyholder." 🇺🇸

CONTEST QUESTION #2

Give us a suggestion of a safety demonstration that would be relevant to your business that LUBA Loss Control could offer policyholders.