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Entrepreneurial mindset continues to Welty Building's Donzell Taylor

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Photo by CONTRIBUTED
PHOTO Donzell Taylor

Entrepreneurs like Donzell “Don” Taylor, president and CEO of Fairlawn-based Welty Building Co., look at the world differently than most.

According to Taylor, who spoke at the Jan. 13 Leadership on Main event at Canal Park, this enables them to recognize opportunities to create value and new business models. Taylor shared some of the unique insights that have led him to evolve Welty from a construction firm into a multifaceted enterprise. Marc Merklin, managing partner of Brouse McDowell, served as moderator.

While still in high school, Taylor launched his first entrepreneurial venture by starting his own construction company to do odd jobs. This gave him his first taste of professional success and the monetary rewards that came with it. Rather than stick with his own lucrative enterprise, though, he opted to take an internship with a construction company to gain more knowledge about the profession.

“It’s not all about the money,” he said. “It’s about building a resume and experience.”

In addition to his own entrepreneurial mindset, Taylor attributes his success to the mentorship of company founder Jerry Welty. After beginning his career in Cleveland’s construction industry, a market he described as “rough and tumble” at the time, Taylor joined Welty Building Corp. Jerry Welty provided valuable examples in his ability to do business as gentleman, to network and to build relationships, Taylor said.

When Taylor became president of Welty Building, he set the company onto a path to diversified enterprise, doing business in major cities across the country, and he turned to those lessons of networking and relationships.

Rather than just “hope the customer doesn’t call” with problems during the warranty period, Taylor said, Welty Building shifted to nurturing the relationship after project completion by creating its Facilities Management arm.

In the construction of the Akron Children’s Hospital Kay Jewelers Pavilion, Welty Building utilized lean manufacturing principles to reduce costs by \$61 million while still giving the client everything it had requested.

Welty Building is now expanding with offices in cities other than Akron; the company also has a presence in Cleveland, Columbus, Pittsburgh and Houston. That presence involves being active in the community, in line with the principles modeled by his mentor, Jerry Welty, Taylor said.

Despite leading the company since 1998, Taylor has chosen to stick with the Welty name. He said the name does not represent a person, but instead a reputation and a set of values.

Those values go beyond Welty, Taylor said, to the company’s community involvement, such as Taylor’s role as chair of the Greater Akron Chamber. In that position, he said, he hopes to encourage

other companies to follow Welty's commitment to stay in the Akron area. He wants to make Akron "a cool place to live, work, and play," following suit on the progress in downtown Cleveland over the past decade.

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