



SCORE column: Family startup finding its way

When Jake David, owner of RetroCrete, was looking for a [business](#), he wanted to find something that his children might be interested in. With three sons and one daughter, he dreamed of working side-by-side.

Now, seven years later, David has one son in the business and one daughter interested.

"I wanted to build something that would offer opportunity to my children," he said. "I love my kids, and it's pretty tough out there finding employment. I thought that if I could give them the opportunity to join a [growing business](#) that they could take over someday, what better thing could I do?"

David had 30 years of experience as a truck [driver](#) and wanted to stay closer to home. Considering his options, he decided on an emerging business that was unknown in the area when he did his startup in 2005.

A friend in Minnesota was restoring concrete and turning the drab gray into works of art. Using staining, engraving, and coating, the old concrete could be made to look like glossy marble tile, old clay bricks, flagstone or cobblestone. David was sold and decided to bring a RetroCrete business (www.retrocrete llc.com) to Northeastern Wisconsin.

After training in Florida, he put together his projections on what he needed to do to make the business work.

"When you're moving in to an arena that doesn't exist, you have to create the market for your work, and that's what I tried to do," David said.

He networked, advertised, and got the word out, and the business began to build. He worked alone until his son, Jason Motkowski, got out of the Marine Corps four years ago. Motkowski didn't hesitate when asked to join the business.

"Of all our kids, he's the one who enjoys the business as much as I do," David said. "He feels like I do — that sense of accomplishment at the end of the day when you've worked with your hands and created something special. It's a good feeling."

The recession has caused some bumps in the [road](#), but David says he's seeing growth again. The business has slowly expanded to where it now offers 20 different products. All of their work is done on existing concrete, and staining and engraving make up the bulk of the business. As changes are made, David involves his son so that he will be able to take it over when the time is right.

"He's a terrific young man to work with," David said. "We work hard, occasionally play together and always have fun together. I've been able to work with this guy for four years and we have a good time, so apparently he feels the same."

Motkowski is quick to agree.

"When I got out of the military, he had the business, and I knew I'd [learn](#) a lot from him," he said. "I ended up liking it and have stuck with it. He directs me without yelling at me, and most importantly, it's fun to go to work. Hopefully, it will become a family tradition."

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