

## **Episode 17 - John Price - Rebranding [00:23:23]**

**Intro:** Welcome to Profiles In Prosperity, with your host David Heimer.

**David Heimer:** Well, I am delighted today to welcome John Price to our podcast. John Price is the president of Aloha Aire in Texarkana, Texas, which he runs with his wife, Marilyn. I've known John for many years now. He's always impressed me and the other members of Service Nation as an astute businessman, a leader in our industry and as a really strong innovator. So John Price, welcome to Profiles In Prosperity and thank you for taking the time to talk with me.

**John Price:** Well, thank you for allowing me this time.

**David Heimer:** Just to kind of give us a frame of reference, can you tell us a little bit about Aloha Aire, where you are and some information about the company, whatever you feel like sharing?

**John Price:** Well, David, we are back down to strictly heating and air conditioning. For years I chased commercial construction with the notion that the next one would be profitable and good, but after over 10 years of that, gave it up. Started plumbing for a brief time and after five years of that, I said that's just not the image and the work that we want to portray who we are and we dropped that. We're back to heating and air and happy as can be. We are indeed, in my opinion, very strongly, the most professional heating and air conditioning company in Texarkana or the surrounding area, and we attribute that to the teaching training we've received from Service Roundtable, Service Nation Alliance, being able to talk to, share with, some of the smartest minds in our industry. We currently have three service technicians, a service manager, and three install groups that do change-outs and re-duct, duct cleaning, that type of thing. And then staff in the office of three ladies.

**David Heimer:** There's a lot of interesting things in your background and history, but the one thing I really wanted to ask you about was rebranding. Because you guys made such a phenomenal change. You guys were the Price Service Company and you moved over to Aloha Aire. And frankly, one of the most beautiful designs I've ever seen in

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heating and air conditioning, it's a real standout. You know, I've seen the before and after pictures. It's a really dramatic change. And it wasn't just the case that you came up with the name Aloha Aire, let's wrap a vehicle, bada B, bada boom, it's all great. I mean, this was quite an involved process that you went through and a complete rebranding. And so I was wondering if you could talk us through that a little bit, but what I'd really like to do is to start off - you told me one time about how you guys came up with the idea for Aloha Aire. I know it involves your trip to your favorite place in the world, Hawaii. So if you could start off with that, I think that would be terrific.

**John Price:** Sure. Let me backup just one time period to really help it make sense. We started the business in 1995 and did what everyone else, that I knew, in the industry had done. We took our last name, added service company, and that's who we were. Everyone in Texarkana, surrounding areas, and for all I knew, around the world, were last-name service companies. And after making some TACA meetings and a few other conferences early, early on, I realized pretty quickly, I was being hoodwinked to plaster the manufacturer's name all over our vans. They had me believing if you didn't have a major brand affiliated with you, you could not survive. Customers demanded a major brand. And I hated spending 8 to \$10,000 a year, way back then, to advertise for this giant manufacturer.

And it was a real sore spot with me. Finally, Marilyn and I came to terms with, we need to make it about us and not the equipment. So we talked and shared and knew that that was a big desire we both had. Well, we were leaving Maui on the evening flight out back in about 2000, and Marilyn leaned over to me, literally, as we're just taking off from the island, she said, John, I've got a name for our company. And I looked at her and said with interest, great, what is it? She said, we ought to call it Aloha Air. And my immediate response was, well, sweetheart we can't do that because there is an Aloha Air that flies jets here in the islands. And she says, well, I tried, you know, I really thought that was a great idea and I've thought about it.

And, you know, at first I thought it was crazy. For deep east Texas, that it would be - even if it was available, that would be dumb. People would laugh at it and make fun of us, that type of thing. So when we got home, I got online and started doing some

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checking. And back then websites and heating and air contractors were just almost non-existent. But I did see that Aloha Air in Hawaii had filed for bankruptcy. Their name for a website was not available, that domain was tied up with them. But I said, you can spell air with an E on the end. So I typed in Aloha Aire with an E. Domain was available. I immediately grabbed it up. So then I told Marilyn, well, guess what? We are going to go to Aloha Aire.

She said, man, John, I've been thinking about it. I don't think that's such a good idea anymore. I talked to my sister Pam in Houston and she thinks it's corny. And so it was back and forth then. She gave her reasons why not. I gave my reasons why I thought it would be a good idea. Well, needless to say, in the long run I won out. And we started off with the Aloha Aire officially at the end of 2001. We didn't have the really nice logo that we have now. We've literally had the guy that did our screen printing and broderie work sit down and he sketched out our original in literally five minutes. And we loved it, and that's what we started with. And then, with joining Service Roundtable and learning the importance of really standing out from the crowd, we went to a professional marketing team that came up with our current logo and wave design and everything and we started the process.

Now, in the beginning, I really didn't think through what this means. Because everything we had set up, from bank accounts to tax certificates with the state of Texas, Arkansas, and then soon to be Louisiana, had to all be changed. Our letterhead had to be changed, our envelopes, our checks, everything that we had printed with the old Price Service Company was obsolete and had to be redone. At that time I started thinking, was that really the right thing to do? Well, let me tell you, it was well worth the effort of redoing a little bit of stationery business cards and name change at the state, and the licensing board for both work in Arkansas Texas and then I'd say in Louisiana. As soon as we went to the new logo, it turned heads in Texarkana - which we're a small east Texas town, population of 65,000 which counts renters, children, college students, you know, I mean, it's a small town.

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And with the new logo, the van stood out like crazy. People were constantly saying, man, John, I can't believe how your company is growing. We see your vans everywhere. We still had the exact same two vans that we had from the beginning, but with the new logo. I mean, it was amazing. And oh, Steve Miles rule of thumb - you've got to be able to see it and read it at 40 feet is so true. And the way that it was done, you're able to recognize it at 40 feet. It's not confusing. You don't think that it's somebody else. They really did a great job with putting the logo together and the wraps for the van. And one of the first times after we got it done, I was driving one of the vehicles and I went to the bank, David, to make a deposit. So I put it in the little slot there at the window and the girl sent it back and she said, let me ask you something, are you all a travel agency?

And at first, it just made me so mad that she couldn't read the heating and air on the side of the van. But then I immediately got the other side of the coin, it got her attention. It might not have told her everything she needed to know as a young 20 something-year-old girl, but it did stand out enough. She questioned what is this? And it's been like that, David, ever since. I don't go in a grocery store - because I wear the Aloha shirt everywhere I go 9, 10, 11 months out of the year - and if I'm in the grocery store, I'll have a stranger come up, oh, you're with Aloha Aire I'll bet. We have so implanted the Aloha look, style, spirit, in Texarkana, that top of mind awareness is not an issue for us. You know, we don't have to put marketing funds on top of mind awareness because the only people that don't know who we are, are those that have just moved into town. And I say that not bragging, but it's the truth. We just had a couple of walk in downstairs, before I got on this call, from Nashville, Arkansas, which is about a 45-minute drive from here. And as she's leaving, she turns around and looks at me and she says, oh, now I get the Aloha Aire, pointing at my shirt.

And it has been the most fun, exciting change that we have ever done with the business since we started in March of 95. Me and the techs being able to wear an Aloha shirt at work every day is not only fun to do, comfortable to do, but it draws attention and it's really positive. In the beginning, I was so afraid of what the other contractors would say.

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And sure enough, when the techs would go on to supply a house, they'd get laughed at, made fun of. But now that we are the company we are in town, there is no laughing anymore. There is no making fun of the Aloha shirt anymore. It's really, really been a foundation, if you will, for the company after making the change.

**David Heimer:** You mentioned the Aloha shirts. So that's a Hawaiian shirt, right? Just a basic Hawaiian shirt. And then you guys put the logo in the corner, right?

**John Price:** No, no. As a matter of fact David, Marilyn has located various times, a good Aloha shirt supplier online. Because you don't want to buy the \$150 Tommy Bahama Aloha shirts.

**David Heimer:** Yeah. And then go crawl up in the attic and {inaudible 13:40}.

**John Price:** Yeah, exactly. Now, I wear some of those that I buy on ebay for a good price. But anyway, they're bright. We've got blue with white flowers and we've got red with white flowers. They are so detectable. I mean, you can't see that employee and not know that's an Aloha shirt. You don't have to put embroidery on it. Now they do wear ID tags with their picture on their lapel or on the shirt pocket that has their name and the company name so when the consumer opens the door, they do indeed know that they are there as Aloha Aire. But no, we just buy the shirts online and that is the uniform. We pay for the cleaning so they look nice every day when they put them on, and carry a spare in their van if they get really dirty, sweaty or something like that.

**David Heimer:** That's fabulous. And the vans, I've seen the vans, I've seen pictures of them. They just stand out. I don't know how to adequately describe the logo, but it's got hibiscus. It's got a wave in it. It's just a beautiful picture and a beautiful logo.

**John Price:** As Marilyn said one time, David, this would never work if we were to indeed move to Maui. Because that's what they expect to see in Maui. It wouldn't stand out. But in deep east Texas, it stands out like crazy and people notice it, people see it. And I would venture to say, we get as many phone calls from the big phone number on the van at a red light. People will write the number down and call. Or, even though they

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shouldn't be doing it, they'll take their cell phone, get it out, push the number in and call for service. We get more calls from that than any direct mail piece we have ever sent out.

**David Heimer:** Wow. Rolling billboards can be amazingly powerful if you do them right.

**John Price:** That's right. That is exactly it. It can't be too busy that you can't tell really what they are, who they are and what they do, or it can't be so small that it looks like somebody hand cut the plastic out and stuck it on - which some around here do literally. But I think we've hit a very happy medium that is noticeable, is pleasant to the eye and it attracts the eye when it's driven or when it's parked. We get, again, a lot of calls from neighbors when our van is parked at that house, saying, hey, we need to get our AC checked out. We saw you down at so-and-so's house, saw your van there and got the number and decided to give you a call.

**David Heimer:** Excellent. So at one point in time - I don't know if you guys are still doing this or not - you private labeled as well? So you are privately putting your own name played on the systems. And I think you were calling it Paradise Comfort Systems, which goes along very nicely with Aloha Aire. Do you still do that?

**John Price:** As a matter of fact, David, we still do that to this day. We push the Paradise Comfort System as our premier premium American-made system with the greatest warranty in the business. We sell {inaudible 17:33} equipment and with a lifetime warranty that it comes with, with the 10 year all parts and then we add the labor. That gives you a selling ability closing ratio that nobody else has. Nobody else in town is selling Paradise Comfort Systems, all American-made equipment with a limited lifetime warranty on the heat exchanger, on the compressor. If it fails, they'll put in a brand new condenser at no charge. If the heat exchanger fails, get a whole new furnace installed at no charge. I mean, with the warranties, it being built in America, I feel like for Texarkana, again, we've got everything going, the right direction for who we are and what we believe.

**David Heimer:** Yep. So you said something that I think is really interesting. So a

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number of times when heating and air conditioning contractors - will private label and put their brand on it, they subordinate that to other brands. You know, the David Heimer system is our value system. It's the best value for your money and it costs less than everything else. And we've always said, that's not a great idea. Why would you do that? And you guys did exactly the opposite. You said, no, no, no. The Paradise Comfort Systems, that's our name. That is the premier product that we sell and that is the best you're going to get.

**John Price:** Right. That's how we do it. And David, we have yet to this day, taken a brochure from a manufacturer out to say, this is why you need to buy this product. We have so instilled in the marketplace, in our technicians, in {inaudible 19:26} that they're sold on the company. They're sold on the reputation as a company and hearing that the product we sell is American made with these warranties. They have yet to ever say, well, do you have a brochure I can look at? We've not done the first. That might not work in a big city, you know, Houston, Dallas, I don't know. I know here it has worked wonderfully well. And I've talked to a lot of contractors over the years that have called asking about branding. That was their big thing. But what do you do about your brochures? I said, nothing. I said, now Service Nation Alliance has put together brochures for every piece of equipment that we sell with our picture, our name on it. But, we don't do it. We don't feel a need, and the customer doesn't for it, so we save that printing money and do something else with it.

**David Heimer:** Yeah. Well, it's quite a credit to you guys as well. If you come into a person's house, you make your presentation and you've established trustworthiness and credibility, they don't need to see the specs on the piece of equipment. They know that you guys are going to take care of them.

**John Price:** Yeah. David, 85% of the manufacturer's spec sheet or even customer brochure, is a language that the consumer has no idea what that means. That is not what sells to most homeowners. Now there are some engineers out there that do want - and we'll give the web address, and they can go and look through the {inaudible 21:17}. But the average homeowner doesn't want all that information. They want to know that

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they're going to be taken care of. They want to know their equipment is going to be efficient for lower utility bills. And if something does happen, we'll be there to make it right. That's what they're interested in.

**David Heimer:** They want to come home to paradise, I think is what you're saying.

**John Price:** That's right. Good tagline there, David.

**David Heimer:** I think I stole that somewhere.

**John Price:** I think you did.

**David Heimer:** Well John, this has been fabulous. I mean, it's such a great story and you guys have done such an amazing job with it. And I can't imagine that there is a contractor in our country or around the world that couldn't learn from this. So I am so grateful to you for taking the time to talk to us today and to tell your story. This has been fabulous.

**John Price:** Thank you very much. You know me, I enjoy talking more than just about anything else. It's a privilege for me to get to share and would be happy to share this with anyone. And can't wait for September to see everyone in Vegas for our conference this year.

**David Heimer:** Yeah. Service World Expo is going to be fabulous, and I look forward to seeing you there. Alright, John. Thank you so much for doing this and I look forward to seeing you again in the near future.

**Outro:** We're always looking for good ideas and interviews for our podcast. If you have an idea or maybe you think you should be interviewed, just shoot an email to [profiles\\_in\\_prosperity@serviceroundtable.com](mailto:profiles_in_prosperity@serviceroundtable.com). That's [profiles\\_in\\_prosperity@serviceroundtable.com](mailto:profiles_in_prosperity@serviceroundtable.com). If you think what we're doing has any value, it would be very helpful if you would give us a great rating on iTunes. Thanks for your support. Hope to see you again soon. Bye

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