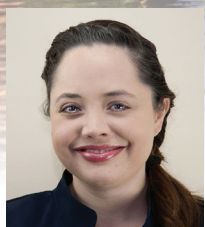


# INDUSTRY LEADERS REVIEW

## Restoration

**Cleanfax brings you its annual Restoration Industry Leaders Review in which three successful industry business owners offer up their success stories — how they got things going, overcame challenges and eventually found success, as well as how they plan to keep succeeding in the future.**



By Amanda Hosey, assistant editor

Amanda Hosey is assistant editor for *Cleanfax*. She has worked in the editing and publishing field for more than five years.

Hosey holds a Bachelor's degree in English and a Master's in creative writing. She can be reached at (205)408-3784 or AHosey@GrandViewMedia.com.

Do you own a successful disaster restoration company that you feel should be featured in *Cleanfax* magazine? If so, please submit a high resolution image of your company logo and a brief description of what your company has accomplished. Send all material to Executive Editor Jeff Cross at JCross@GrandViewMedia.com.

## renue®

VENUE REVITALIZATION SPECIALISTS

When David Grossman bought Lombard, Illinois' Renue Systems (at that time National Appeal Carpet) in 2010, he had no cleaning, franchising or hotel experience.

"I spent most of my 15-year career in private equity/venture capital and operational and strategic consulting," he said. Grossman, the owner, president and CEO of Renue, who holds a Ph.D in economics from Harvard, had been looking for the perfect company that fit the criteria he'd established, when a broker turned his attention to Appeal Carpet.

Grossman describes how he chose to buy Appeal: "I searched for a good small business that I could acquire

and operate, get my arms around fairly quickly, with a good team (where the founder was staying), that had a good business model that had become a little sleepy (there hardly was a customer brochure), that had good trends, and where the primary risk was operational."

### Call to adventure

Appeal Carpet began in 1991 when then 21-year-old Marty Jollette began cleaning carpet in local resi-

dences and small businesses. After a few years passed, Jollette took on two partners (one of which was his father) and began a second office in another city. The owners saw the potential for growth through franchising and began expanding. At the same time, the company had also found a

preference for working with hotels.

In 2010, Jollette's father sold his majority share to Grossman, and the rest, as they say, is history.



David Grossman (right) and Marty Jollette teamed up in 2010.



## Road of trials

In its near 20 years as Appeal Carpet, Renue acquired a number of franchise locations, but the company wasn't always the strong, cohesive franchisor it is today.

"We probably got complacent and did not support [franchisees] as much as possible. We were focused more on finding franchisees and less on trying to determine if the franchisee candidates would be a good fit with Renue and the type of business we do," Grossman explains. "Thus, when the company was sold in early 2010 ...we had a number of franchisees that were not a great fit with our company."

In the years immediately following the company's transition, Renue added more and more services and became more market-focused. It also began to encourage franchise owners to work on the business, rather than actually being out in the field. This resulted in franchise locations being sold, bought back, not renewed or, in some cases, terminated.

The company also experienced some troubles surrounding its name change from National Appeal to Renue, which occurred in late 2010, after the transition. The company helped to make the name change a success by co-branding the two names for two years and keeping all contact information the same through email forwarding, etc.

After some initial troubles during and immediately following the company's transition to new management, Renue's business is booming. The company has three company-owned offices and 22 franchise locations with approximately 150 employees and 50 trucks in the United States, Canada, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

## Apotheosis

Renue's revenue over the past few years has doubled as a result of adding new services and clarifying its brand identity. The company also has established itself as the preferred supplier partner of Avendra, the largest purchasing organization for the lodging industry.

"We derive significant benefit from our preferred vendor partnerships in which Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt, Wyndham, Best Western, Fairmont and others encourage their properties to use our services. [And] we have folks in our home office that contact individual properties by email

and phone to set up meetings for our franchisees."

Due to Renue's wide selection of services, it is able to provide scheduled maintenance help in emergency situations and take on specialized requests, like odor and smoke treatment.

Grossman says the company is currently looking to expand by opening new franchise locations in the U.S. and overseas, increasing sales and profitability of current locations – currently it has added extra marketing personnel, increased the number of preferred vendor partnerships and introduced additional services – and starting additional facilities management businesses, like last year's new concrete polishing and epoxy coating business.

## Rescue from without

"When there is a problem, don't run from it," Grossman says, adding staying ahead of problems is critical to success. That means rectifying any issues as quickly as possible, but also, not trying to win every customer if it means lowering prices.

"One of the reasons we have been successful (and we do not take that for granted) is that we view ourselves as a customer service-focused marketing company," Grossman shares. "There are many cleaning and restoration companies, but not all take as seriously the view of helping the customer with their problems."

Despite this devotion to helping customers, Grossman says taking care of the Renue team is the key. By focusing on making sure the company's employees and franchisees are happy and well supported, Renue makes sure the customers receive the best service possible.

"To be honest to me our business is a widget. I could be doing this in another industry," says Grossman. "What gets me excited is building a strong and viable business. A key part of that joy is building a team – which I am very proud of – and a strong culture."

Grossman says the most important aspect of success is perseverance, keeping striving to do better and being willing to see and do what it takes to improve. "I have also learned that you never know how life will take you, but being adaptable is important." ■