

MONEY MATTERS



STEVE WILSON

Wayne Eidson Sr.'s philosophy is simple, '... figure out what you do best and just do more of it.'

'No Shortcuts' for this Roofer

Founded in 1967, Lan-Way Roofing switched its focus for higher margins

By Chris Baysden

RALEIGH – Roofing has to be one of the toughest jobs this side of working in a tobacco field.

First off, you're often standing on a black surface in the hot sun with absolutely no shade. Then there's the physical labor itself – tearing off an old roof and painstakingly installing a new one. Holidays in the sun, this ain't.

But it can be a good business if you aren't afraid of hard work. Just ask Wayne Eidson, who has made a living running Lan-Way Roofing Co. Inc. for more than four decades. The Raleigh-based firm does roof repair and replacement work for commercial and industrial customers. It employs 30 to 50 people – depending on the number of jobs it's working on at the time – and expects to generate about \$3 million in revenue this year. That's up from roughly \$2.5 million last year.

While Eidson's days of actively swinging a hammer are long gone, there's no doubting that part of the job holds a special place in his heart. "My first love is in the field," Eidson says. "That's where the action is."

Eidson, a Tennessee native who holds a business degree from UNC-Chapel Hill, and a partner founded the company, which originally had a different contracting focus, way back in 1967. Wayne eventually bought out his partner, but the company kept the Lan-Way name that was inspired by a combination of parts of the two original owners' names.

Eidson is still the majority owner of the company. Son Wayne Jr. is a minority owner and the heir apparent. Junior works out of the company's Tarboro office while Dad runs the Raleigh location.

Lan-Way primarily plies its trade in the Carolinas and Virginia – typically within 100 miles of one of its two offices. "We do all we can around here," says Eidson. "But we are a traveling company."

Aside from really small projects, jobs typically range anywhere from \$50,000 to \$1.3 million. Most of the work is in the \$500,000 to \$800,000 range. The company does everything from leak repair and moisture surveys to inspections and preventative maintenance to roof replacements.

"They do excellent work," says Dan Crowley, a facilities manager for Ann's House of Nuts. He says a company in the food industry can't

afford to have any leaky roofs – in part because it could lead to contamination from bird droppings with salmonella in them. Crowley's company has been working with Lan-Way for about seven years. He says the firm is honest and reputable and does what it says it will do.

"There's no shortcuts or anything like that," adds Crowley.

Karen Brown, the president of asset management for Coldwell Banker Commercial TradeMark Properties, says her real estate management firm has been working with Lan-Way for about five years. She says leaky roofs are a big problem because of the mold and mildew that can result. But Lan-Way can be out to a site on just a few hours notice, if necessary, to address a problem, she says. Brown appreciates the firm's responsiveness and says that Lan-Way's pricing is in line with competitors.

Lan-Way doesn't do residential work or any new commercial construction. It did the latter until the mid-1990s, when Eidson realized that his margins were much better for repair and replacement work on existing business. So he made the tough decision to exit the new construction market – leading to some cost savings through downsizing.

"I have a real simple philosophy – figure out what you do best and just do more of it," he says.

LAN-WAY ROOFING CO. INC.

- Founded: 1967
- Offices: Home office in Raleigh and a satellite office in Tarboro.
- Owners: Wayne Eidson Sr. (majority) and son Wayne Jr.
- Projected revenue for current fiscal year: \$3 million
- Website: www.lanwayroofing.com