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TERRY KEMP:

**SOARING BY
GROUNDING
WITH
UNSHAKABLE
PRINCIPLES**

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ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS, YOU WILL
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BY NERISSA MCNAUGHTON

ABOVE: TERRY KEMP, PRESIDENT & CEO, KEMWAY BUILDERS.
PHOTO SOURCE: REBECCA LIPPIATT



Kemway Builders' influence is all over Edmonton, but this humble company, and the man behind it, prefer to stay in the background of their many accomplishments. While much can be said about the many commercial, industrial, institutional, and renovation/improvement projects Kemway has undertaken for sites like FedEx, AADAC, Wika Instruments, the City of St. Albert's barrier wall and more, the impact of Kemway's value system is just as enduring.

Since opening the doors in 1990 with his dad, Herman, Terry Kemp, president & CEO, has instilled a set of core values that he has never waived from – not for an instant. These values: excellence, integrity, people, teamwork, and results-orientated focus, have seen Kemway through Alberta's economic cycles; through times of rapid growth, through recessions, and most recently, the pandemic.

Terry, his wife Karoline, his brother Glen, and the newest addition to the ownership team, John Maysky, work together to ensure Kemway accomplishes this one overarching goal: to make a positive impact on people and other companies from all walks of life and across all industries.

To understand the why and how, Business in Edmonton talked to Terry about his early influences, and why the values he launched the company with 30 years ago still matter today.

"My dad was in construction," Terry shares. "It was a family business that he started the year I was born. Construction has always been in our blood. I started at an early age. By 12 I was helping on sites." He pauses to chuckle. "That would be highly illegal now!"

"What really drew me in and developed my love of construction," he continues, "is the problem-solving side of things. You start with nothing and you create something. That evolution is why I continued in the industry."

In addition to building, Terry has always been a fan of technology. He apprenticed as an electrician and continues to infuse leading edge technology into every project. Terry explains, "I always try to challenge things, to make things better. I don't think I've ever been happy with the status quo. I like to try different things. Not everything I try is successful, but generally speaking, I have enjoyed continuous personal and professional growth and improvement."



John, COO, who has worked with the Kems for over three years, points out, "Terry has a personal work ethic that has really been the foundation of the organization and that has set the standard for many years. That standard is the passion that sets the success of our continued industry leadership. In the short time I've been here I would say the biggest highlight of Terry's career is the impact he's had on the lives he has touched. While we value our projects and awards, we generally talk more about how our people have grown. His biggest success is the people he has helped better their lives."

Terry agrees, but he has another highlight of his career which is, "the day Karoline, CFO, joined me in the business. I'm an idea man. I have tons of ideas but not all of them work. Karoline helps keep me focused and grounded."

ABOVE: TERRY KEMP, PRESIDENT & CEO, AND JOHN MAYSKY, COO, KEMWAY BUILDERS.

PHOTO SOURCE: REBECCA LIPPIATT

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In fact, John calls them “the perfect complement. I don’t know many couples that can work together the way they have. It’s an amazing balance.”

When Terry started Kemway, he aligned with a group of subcontractors from various industries. What they all had in common were the shared values and commitment to service he espoused. As Kemway’s success grew, he wanted to ensure this group could share the success too, so he, alongside a real estate partner, launched numerous joint ventures and a trust strategy to help them grow their businesses and have more access to opportunities.

“At the end of the day, our philosophy in life is not ‘what’s in it for us,’” says Terry. “I worked hard and took advantage of every opportunity, but I also had other influences that led to me being successful. This is why I believe that when you give back, you are blessed. From that perspective, charitable involvement and giving back has become our way of life.”

John further points out, “The Kems put themselves last. They always make sure everyone else is taken care of. When they have done that, and a little more, they take care of themselves. Even simple things like at a staff function, they will eat only after the staff have been served. They take care of everyone else first be it a team member, a stranger, or a friend. That is what makes them unique.

An example of the care Terry has for his team was seen recently during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It changed and challenged us, when COVID-19 first hit,” admits Terry. “We were scrambling as to how we were going to handle things, but the safety and well-being of our people was the most important concern.”

In addition to sending many of the office team to work from home for a number of weeks and making provisions for added safety for the field staff, management met with the crews frequently to reassure them that everything

possible was being done to ensure their safety and continued employment, and to check in to confirm that the team was doing well mentally and physically.

For Terry, however, this level of care for the staff is just another part of living a life with integrity.

“Integrity creates a level of trust,” he says. “When I work with people that have integrity, I know we are going to communicate with all our facts on the table. Projects are completed with less headaches than when people are trying to bend the rules in their favour.”

“Terry strives to work with people that have integrity,” John adds. “That is why it’s a pillar of our organization. He does the right thing whether or not people are watching. That is just who he is and who he will continue to be for his lifetime.”

With 30 years in the business, Terry has learned many things about himself, namely how much leaders need to rely on others in order to be truly effective.

“You can’t do it alone. You can be the face of something. You can be the leader of something, but if you want to be successful, you can’t do it alone. You need your wing men and women. Surround yourself with people that ask the right questions the right way, that challenge you, that work with you and understand you. As I moved along in my career, I realized I needed a whole lot of people – my family, employees, strategic partners, suppliers and more – to work alongside me to create a successful company.”

It may have already been three decades since Kemway opened the doors, but Terry is still excited about work every day.

“There are always challenges but they don’t bring me down. Maybe I’m too optimistic! Maybe I should be more realistic. But I’m always hopeful because when I look at the younger generation and see how they are moving things forward, it’s so exciting! It shows me that the hard work ethic continues on with the next generation, and they are running with the baton.”

He will also never regret establishing Kemway in Edmonton.

“This city has been very good to us. It’s big enough so there is healthy competition, yet small enough to provide

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opportunity for everyone to succeed. You meet people from every walk of life in Edmonton. Generally speaking, the business community in this city works very, very hard. I’ve been in other cities where this is not the case. In Edmonton, if there is a problem, you can find someone to help solve it and get the job done. Edmonton has a lot of entrepreneurs and a firm entrepreneurial spirit that allows us to network across multiple industries.”

Terry has always gravitated to people with a can-do attitude and to people that share his unshakeable values. At the end of each day, after he has put his company, his people, his family, and his community first, he goes home satisfied with Kemway’s trajectory and its role in the city, knowing he’s done his best.

“After all,” he concludes with a smile, “if you help enough people achieve their goals, you will achieve yours.”

Terry’s future plans for Kemway are to continue making a positive impact in the city, in the province, in the community and for each member of his valued team. John will assume more responsibility and duties over time as a part of the planned and responsible succession. No matter who is at the helm now or 30 years from now one thing is certain. The Kems’ influence and core values will remain the foundation of Kemway now and in the years to come. **B**

ABOVE: TERRY KEMP, PRESIDENT & CEO, AND JOHN MAYSKY, COO, KEMWAY BUILDERS.

PHOTO SOURCE: REBECCA LIPPIATT