

Executive Q&A: Waste Pro President Sean Jennings



*Sean Jennings, President of
Waste Pro USA*

Waste Pro USA announced Aug. 13 that Sean Jennings was elected president by the Longwood, Florida-based company's board of directors. Jennings, who is the son of Waste Pro founder, CEO and chairman John Jennings, will be tasked with

leading the third-largest privately owned solid waste and recycling company in the country into the future.

Jennings talked with Waste Today about growing up in the industry, his new role and the vision he has for Waste Pro moving forward.

Waste Today (WT): What was it like growing up in the industry?

Sean Jennings (SJ): Some of my earliest memories are of being at a driver cookout in a yard full of trucks and taking home souvenirs like pieces of rusty rebar and other trash. I have more great memories a few years later, when Waste Pro started, riding from site to site with my father. I always say I was born in the hopper. When I was old enough to drive I began working summers in the office or on the back of the truck and continued through college.

After graduation, I was fortunate enough to work

in a foreign country living among people who do not have the many blessings we have in the U.S. I spent a year in Costa Rica on a residential rear-load route and also at the most pioneering landfill in the country. I then worked on projects in the Delta of Mississippi and Georgia before beginning more formal roles in Florida as division manager of Clearwater-Tampa areas, then moving to Bradenton-Sarasota.

Over the years, I've learned the nuances of many roles, from the art of applying decals correctly on a hot summer day to managing the transition of a sizeable acquisition and a new contract with a startup date that coincided with a hurricane landfall. My experience has been broad and well-rounded to say the least.

WT: How did these previous experiences give you a feel for the different aspects of the company?

SJ: I still have much to learn about our company, our industry and the person interpreting it all—myself. After being involved in a range of situations that arise in our industry, I have a better idea of what one experiences in different facets of the job. I have an understanding of what it takes to get through the tough times successfully and the ways to communicate with diverse groups of people. I realize my role will require an increased level of support for our people. We're in a time in our economy where finding people, hiring correctly, then properly onboarding these individuals and keeping them on a career path is a formidable task. I will make

this an integral part of our mission.

WT: Obviously, your father has been a big player in the waste space for quite some time. What kinds of things about management have you learned from watching him?

SJ: He taught me that there is no prewritten manual or preconceived notion that can defeat a person who is highly motivated. The characteristics that will always be central to Waste Pro are those that are central to my father and our leaders at the company. Those characteristics are the belief in the power of a positive mindset, a burning passion to create a better life for our people and enjoying the ride along the way. We will continue to attract and support those who share these values.

WT: Can you talk about any new initiatives you have going on at Waste Pro?

SJ: Our new initiatives are aimed at creating a greater support network for our people to grow. We are always looking for more ways we can make the communities we work in a better place to live. We have spent a great deal of time and energy on creating our brand, which we refer to as “the distinguishable difference.” Therefore, as we onboard drivers, we want to spend time assisting them in becoming contributors to the communities they serve by helping them become

a safe, competent employee.

We want our employees to be financially secure as well. We’ve developed programs such as our \$10,000 Safety Award and our Driver Training Centers to ensure our team members have the financial capability and resources to provide the life they desire for their family without the financial stresses many now face. We believe this further allows them to be valuable and influential members of the communities they work in.

WT: What goals do you have for the organization as president?

SJ: Being in front-line roles, I’ve seen the need to improve communications. We can only achieve our goals if we first have effective and efficient communication.

Overall, our goal is to create a community people dream about being a part of. I say that, while garbage is our vessel, people are our power. We want to effectively communicate the commitments we make to the clients we serve, the exceptional quality of our employees and the equipment in their neighborhoods. I want all who see us to know we strive to be the difference they want in a business that answers their environmental needs.

John Jennings discussed Waste Pro’s customer-centric focus as the cover story for May/June 2018.

