

TRANSCRIPT: DAN HAILE INTERVIEW

Mr. Dan Haile · Co-Founder and Executive Vice-President of Texas Pride Fuels

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An interview with Mr. Dan Haile, the Co-Founder and Executive Vice-President of Texas Pride Fuels. Haile is a 1996 graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

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Could you please introduce yourself and tell us about your career?

My name is Dan Haile. I'm Texas A&M Class of 1996. I got a Bachelor of Science and Agribusiness and a Bachelor of Business Administration and Accounting. For ten years, I've worked for various other companies before becoming an entrepreneur. I spent three years with Monfort Beef and Lamb, a year in Colorado, and two years in Dumas, Texas. I spent a year at a sign manufacturing plant in Abilene learning quite a bit of interesting manufacturing, accounting, and policies there. I spent two years as a financial analyst for an insurance agency in Fort Worth, and I've been four years as an accounting manager for an oil and gas company in Wichita Falls. At that part, my brother and I co-founded Texas Pride Fuels, which we've been operating for the last 12 and a half years.

What do you value most about your experiences at Texas A&M?

The experiences at Texas A&M, it's a little bit difficult to put my finger on just one because I got a world-class education here. Things that I learned 25 years ago I'm still using today, and we had some great times while we were here at Texas A&M. I had a large group of friends, and we studied hard, we worked hard, and we also played hard. So, I really value those memories from here, but I have a group of nine other friends that we've stayed for 25 years now, and I value those guys a tremendous amount. They keep me grounded, and they bring me up, and we all work together to make each other better men and better Aggies. So, I value those guys a lot, so I would have to say at the top of the list would be the friends that I made here, followed closely by that world-class education that has served me so well over the years.

Besides hard work, what is needed to be a successful entrepreneur?

You have to enjoy challenges and problem solving a lot. If you think you're gonna start a business and then it's going to get routine after a few years and you're just going to get to do the same old thing, that's not been my experience. Every day brings a fresh set of challenges and opportunities, and you have to really enjoy problem solving, and you really have to enjoy being on the hot seat a lot because, as it has been said, the buck stops here, and that's not the truth. You have to make the decisions that are going to impact the lives of you and all your employees, and my brother/partner and I take that very seriously, and then we realize these jobs are people's livelihood, and so when a challenge arrives, we have to think of it as maybe not even what's in the best interest of the owners of the company, but what's in the best interest of the company, and how to solve this challenge so that we take care of the umbrella we call it, the company, that takes care of all of us underneath it. So, challenges and problem solving are constantly arriving, and you have to enjoy working on those.

Do you have any advice for agricultural economics students who are about to graduate and start their careers?

I would say that we work so that we can live. We don't live to work, and that's important to remember for balance, but don't be worried or concerned about working hard or having a challenging job because you can get a great amount of satisfaction out of life by having a successful career, and a job that challenges you, and pushes your limits. So, that's all encompassed in hard work, in doing a good job, and so when somebody says that you're going to work hard, don't be afraid to tell them, "I've worked through Texas A&M University, and I know how to work hard," and the second thing I think is what way can you bring value to an organization. What problems do they have that you can help solve, and if you are looking around while you're doing your job, and you see something that makes you could help fix, don't be afraid to go to your manager and say, "I think I can help you solve this problem by doing this." Nobody really likes to see the buck passed on, so don't come up with a solution that says we'll have somebody else do this, but find a way that you can work to solve that problem because as people see value from their employees, they reward those employees more, so do not be intimidated by hard work because working through Texas A&M University, you've proven that you can work hard and finding ways to bring value to your organization is very important.

What has been the biggest challenge in your career, and how have you faced it?

I find that motivating people is a challenge. It's one of my biggest challenges, and I work on it constantly. I'm constantly trying to read, and study, and understand, and find new ways to keep people motivated because even the best employees or managers or partners get burned out after a while, and you have to find a way to re-engage those people. You have to talk about what problems they're having and help them solve those problems. Don't just be a shoulder to cry on, which is what they need sometimes, but help them find a way to overcome this challenge so that they can go back to enjoying their work and being productive, and being able to set up that communication with people so that you can talk about honestly what the problems are and how to solve them, that's always been a challenge to me because people are scared to tell the boss "I'm not happy with this" or "I don't like this," and so you kinda have to be creative in the way you have those conversations, and then people will all different, differently motivated, you know. Some people are just, "I want to make as much money as I can, and I'm not interested in hearing about a good job done," or those kind of things, but I would think that most people like making good money, but they really enjoy hearing their boss come and sit down in their office and say, "I'm really proud of the way that you did this job. I'm really proud of what you accomplished here." So, I think communicating with employees and motivating them is a great challenge.

What is your proudest accomplishment within your career?

My proudest accomplishment... it's a little tough question, but we started Texas Pride Fuels with just two trucks and four employees, and we've grown that company to a very large size in three different states that we operate, and so I think we started small, and we've grown properly, and I guess what I'm proud about that growth is that we have managed to grow in a positive way. We have not ever looked at bankruptcy, or trying to skim on our mills, or anything like that, and that goes back to your integrity as a person. You have to want to be the company that is secure and grounded and solid for your employees because they're counting on you, but at the same time you have to be able to grow. You need to be able to grow, and to be able to balance that, that security of being a strong company yet being risky enough to go out there and grow at times has been a very big challenge for us, and I'm proud of the way my brother, who's the co-founder and president of the company, and I have been able to tackle those challenges. I'm proud of that.

What kind of goals do you continue to set? How do these help you to grow?

I continue to try to increase my education, and it's maybe not in a formal sense; I'm not sitting in classrooms and listening to professor's or taking tests, but I'm trying to grow my knowledge base and by reading or maybe using webinars or other different resources that are out there, I'm constantly trying to expand and work on what I'm weak at because I think as a manager and as an entrepreneur, that's how you become better: finding what your own deficiencies are, identifying them, and then taking steps to improve on those. So, I try to be a lifelong learner as much as I can. That's difficult with the day-to-day challenges of a family and of business, but being a lifelong learner is very, very valuable, and that is what has helped me grow as a manager and as an owner.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Well, I would just like to say I feel extremely privileged to be inducted into the Ty Timm Honor Registry. When you see the other people that have been inducted into this registry and how incredibly successful they are, it, it, it makes me feel favored, and blessed, and like the selection committee was very generous to include me in this group, and I will say that I am excited to see the future inductees because the level of students that Texas A&M University continues to put out is world-class, second to none. I have a lot of Aggies that work for me, and they are not just employees. They are more than coworkers, they are a part of my extended family because they're so dedicated and hardworking, so I feel very privileged to be inducted into the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

Mr. Dan Haile | Transcript
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