

TRIAD BUSINESS JOURNAL

2018 MOST ADMIRABLE CEOs

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Jim Brady

► CEO, BRADY SERVICES

When Jim Brady, CEO of Brady Services, got a job as an exchange trader, he realized he was in a zero-sum game: You're either on the winning side or you're on the losing side. Simple as that.

He looked around the room one day and realized that his co-workers seemed perpetually stressed out and overworked. So he went home for Thanksgiving and talked to his dad, Brady Services founder Don Brady. Then he realized he didn't have to work in an industry that only had winners and losers.

"I want to create a win-win for everyone: a win for company, a win for the customer — you can do that in the service industry," Jim Brady said. "And then also it makes an economic win so we can reinvest in the future."

That's when he realized he wanted to join Brady Services, a company that provides its customers with a range of HVAC and building solutions, including energy conservation, building automation and green design.

Founded in 1962 as a Trane franchise, Greensboro-based Brady Services has grown from a four-person startup to a company with more than 450 employees. It has nine locations serving the Southeast. In the past four years, Brady has created 17 green jobs and currently has more than 30 job openings — all without using outside funding.

The company is working with Cary-based SAS Institute to give customers a building strategy that predicts mechanical failures before they happen.



Jim Brady is CEO of Brady Services in Greensboro.

And last year, the company began installing more than 10,000 new roadway light fixtures along Interstate 40 and Interstate 85 and upgrading more than 12,000 fixtures in N.C. Department of Transportation visitor and maintenance facilities.

The services that this company provides are why Brady said he got involved with his family's company in the first place — "caring for our associates, our customers and our community."

Age: 54

What was your first job as a youth? Worked on a farm getting up hay and picking tobacco.

Birthplace? Greensboro

What three traits are necessary for a CEO to be successful? First, be open and readily available to give thoughtful advice to your associates. Second, be customer-focused and obsessive about their needs. Finally, seek consensus. Be decisive and direct with respect.

Tell us about a time when you felt like giving up and how you resolved it: My dad always taught us that giving up was never an option, especially when your customers need you to come through.

What is the biggest challenge you face right now in leading your company? Finding talented people who are interested in building a career and continuously improving through lifelong learning.

What's something about being a CEO that no one ever told you? You do have to focus on the details. You can't just focus on the vision and strategy.

What one question do you most want a job candidate to ask you? What does it take to be successful in your organization?

Share one thing about yourself that would surprise people: I like gardening and growing vegetables.

What do you do for fun? Spend time with family and friends, and all things associated with being on the water.

— Rebecca Ayers