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IT'S BEEN NEARLY
50 YEARS
OF SERVICE
BUT ACTION
ELECTRICAL
KEEPS PICKING
UP THE PACE

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Always Ready for Action!

It's been nearly 50 years of service but Action Electrical keeps picking up the pace
By Nerissa McNaughton

ON OUR COVER:

ABOVE: BLAKE BUNTING AND DON BUNTING
PHOTO SOURCE: PRODUCTION WORLD

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ALWAYS READY FOR ACTION!

IT'S BEEN NEARLY 50 YEARS OF SERVICE BUT ACTION ELECTRICAL KEEPS PICKING UP THE PACE

BY NERISSA MCNAUGHTON

In 1973 Don Bunting had an entrepreneurial spirit, a drive to create, and a basement that was ideal for a home office. With that, he launched Action Electrical. The rest, as they say, is history. Forty-nine years have passed and the home-based business is now a thriving corporation. Don's son, Blake, General Manager, helps to oversee four divisions (Projects, Service, TEGG, Energy) and along with a team of dedicated individuals, Action Electrical continues to grow and thrive. Action's story started with Don; Blake is driving the next chapter – and it's an exciting one.

"I started working at Action Electrical during my grade 8 summer," Blake reflects. "I was doing inventory in the shop, cleaning the floors and tracking tools. That led me to working full-time in the summers until university."

Blake attended university in Missouri where he earned a business and marketing degree, and where he also met his wife. There was never any pressure to return to the family business, but he felt drawn to it and returned in 1996.

"Dad launched Action Electrical a year after I was born," Blake explains, "so it's always been part of my life. I had some other avenues to pursue, but I kept coming home to the family business."

One of the draws, for Blake, is the different way he and the management team run the company. There is no "top down" style of management. Rather, the approach is very holistic. Each division is run and managed independently with teams fully empowered to make choices and try strategies as they

see fit. Success is not measured as much in sales or targets, but the overall health of the organization.

Blake points out, "Yes, there have been some professional and personal milestones, but what I have achieved is thoroughly trumped by having a healthy organization. When I think of success, it means the health of our team, the health of our culture, the health of the finances and the interpersonal and client relationships."

He continues, "Health is vital to the success of a company in so many ways. Nothing is more detrimental to a business than a dysfunctional team. It is part of my responsibility to ensure we remain a healthy organization."

Health, for both Don and Blake, includes work/life balance for themselves and their team. This is encouraged in every department. For Blake, that balance includes hunting, fishing, time at the lake and bonding with Don over their shared passion for classic cars.

They share a passion for keeping pace with the changing industry landscape too, weighing new trends against viability and striking while the iron is hot. Nowhere is this more evident in the company's history than Action Electrical's entry into the energy market. Why? Because it is focused squarely on renewable energy.

"I had looked into the solar industry a number of years ago, but we lacked the resources and government incentives and consumer interest was low at that time," Blake points out.

RIGHT: BLAKE BUNTING AND DON BUNTING
PHOTO SOURCE: PRODUCTION WORLD



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“IT’S IMPORTANT TO HAVE DIVERSIFICATION IN THE INDUSTRY,” SAYS BLAKE. “WITHOUT DIVERSIFICATION, HOW DO YOU KEEP 100 STAFF CONSISTENTLY EMPLOYED? WHAT DO YOUR FINANCIAL STATEMENTS LOOK LIKE? WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE THIS DIVERSE BUSINESS MODEL, WHICH ACTUALLY LED TO SOME OF OUR BEST YEARS OCCURRING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC.

“However, recently things have changed in the market and we made the choice to engage. We hired a manager last year to lead our newest division. We are focusing on solar, EV charging and other sustainable energy methods.”

Each time Action Electrical launches a division, he says it feels like a startup all over again. Well, this startup has taken off as it will achieve more than 50 completed projects in its first year.

It’s all part of the larger plan.

“It’s important to have diversification in the industry,” says Blake. “Without diversification, how do you keep 100 staff consistently employed? What do your financial statements look like? We are blessed to have this diverse business model, which actually led to some of our best years occurring through the pandemic. That was not typical for many businesses; we maintained our staffing levels during the thick of the pandemic. When we saw that, we knew we were built right and have grown the right way.”

Don, the founder, agrees and includes the team in the reason for the company’s continued success.

“We choose our key people and allow them to grow into their positions so they can be successful in ways that are meaningful and attainable for them,” says Don of the way

Action Electrical has always hired and maintained a growing pool of talent. “This strategy has proven successful as we have people we hired and trained right out of school. Many have been here past the 20-year mark. We look for individuals who want to learn, grow and bust out of the status quo. When we find those people, we put them into positions of trust, then step out of their way. For the most part we hire right and hire the people who appreciate and see what they can achieve long-term in their empowered positions.”

Blake couldn’t agree more. “A lot of people talk about the challenges of manpower and building a cohesive team, but that is one our greatest strengths. We don’t often have the issues of losing years of talent and we keep fresh ideas infusing into the brand through new hires.”

Unlike many companies right now battling staffing challenges, the main issue for Action Electrical is the broken supply chain.

“Commodities are uncontrollable in a way I have never seen before,” sighs Don. “In our project division, the challenge is to control costs and estimate prices when steel and copper increase almost daily. That is a big risk. On the supply chain side, we are at the mercy of manufacturers and raw materials. We have a schedule that depends on getting certain products in by a specified time.”

As with every challenge Action Electrical has faced over the years, they take this one head on. For father and son, it all comes right back to the team.

“We overcome challenges by having the right people in the right positions,” continues Don. “Even when deadlines are tight or new markets are entered, we do not impulse hire. We talk to people for months, even years. When they feel ready to join, we know we have someone that won’t let the company, or themselves, down. No matter what goes on around us, we succeed by having the right people in the right seats.”

“That is the biggest reward,” Blake agrees, “watching our teams flourish in their roles and maximize their strengths. It goes back to healthy growth. To have a healthy, happy workforce is, for me, the most satisfying aspect.”

Don regards his son with paternal pride, “I have to include Blake in that. To see him grow from someone working in the



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back of the shop counting screws to where he is now, well, we are very proud.”

That’s not to say mistakes have been avoided. Mistakes are inevitable and they cost the company, at times, money, talent and a bit of sanity.

“I’ve been in the industry since 1962,” Don says with a wry grin. “I’ve seen everything, including missteps we have made along the way. I’ve wondered sometimes, ‘why did we do this or that,’ but that is how you learn. You observe, you learn, you transition, you correct and you work through your challenges together.”

The business model, diversity and teamwork are vital to Action Electrical, but for Don and Blake there is another, very humble, aspect that drives personal and professional success.

“We are a faith-based organization,” says Don. “We don’t push that on anyone but it is an integral part of who we are.”

Blake nods, “Our faith is part of our DNA and part of our culture. It influences our decisions and drives my personal belief in service leadership. I find the biggest fault in leadership is ego. Our success is not about us. It is about our people. My role is to be a sounding board and to provide direction while being of service to our staff and our customers.”

With all these pieces of the puzzle in place, it is no wonder why Action Electrical can proudly showcase work on some of Canada’s most innovative and recognizable spaces. Along with Remington Development Corporation, Action Electrical has completed a series of design assist warehouses for Amazon, FedEx, Fountain Tire, Weatherford International and numerous others. Telus Communications Inc. is another vital partner for Action Electrical and has been for more than 35 years.

“We have longstanding relationships with numerous general contractors and work closely with them to provide budgeting, pre-qualifications and requests for proposals. This approach has been effective in showcasing our team, our capabilities and our unique business model. We also take on the role of prime contractor for projects across the province with heavy electrical scopes,” adds Blake. “We have completed numerous prime contracts for Telus, ATB Place Towers, ATCO Centre Tower, NAIT, various WCB buildings, CFB Wainwright and many more. We take on the liability, the risk and the management of those contracts, leveraging our niche areas of expertise.”

A process that is unique to the construction industry is Action’s Full Circle Commitment. At the completion of each project, Action’s TEGG technicians go to work. These level 1 and 2 thermographers utilize state-of-the-art equipment to perform infrared scanning and ultrasonic testing on



electrical distribution in order to detect abnormally high thermal patterns. These quality control steps allow Action to check for any electrical anomalies and to repair any electrical deficiencies and workmanship issues. Once the testing has been completed, a detailed online report is presented to the general contractor and owner, showing the completed repairs along with the electrical distribution inventory. At that time, Action's service department will oversee the warranty period specific to the project and continue maintaining the building for years to come.



Action Electrical helps build communities too. Don is the chair of Birch Bay Ranch, where children can enjoy summer camp and meet positive role models. Alongside their church family they help support children in Cambodia and have seen children through to adulthood thanks to the donations towards their care and education. TELUS Friendly Future Foundation, Hope Mission, LeaderImpact, Vanguard College and more are also supported by the Buntings and Action Electrical.

In keeping with their humble nature, the pair concludes with a long list of people to thank for Action's nearly 50 years of service.

"In addition to our team, clients, vendors, suppliers and manufactures, I would like to acknowledge my father for letting me put my handprint on the company. I thank my parents, my wife Jill, my children and the core management and field team, all of whom have been vital to our success," says Blake.

Don smiles, "And I thank you, Blake. You earned your spot here, not because you are my son, but because you went away, graduated, got married in the States then chose to come back here and put Action Electrical into your long-term plans. I also thank my wife Grace and our three other sons, Brooks, Brad and Damon. Brooks was our oldest son and we lost him to an impaired driver in 1992. He also worked for us. Brad and Damon are successful in both of their careers. When we started the company in our home's basement with little kids running around and me travelling often – that was hard. I had a lot of people at home and at work supporting me. When I look back, I know none of this happened by me doing anything on my own. Numerous people uprooted their lives and moved to various locations to support the company. It is because of them that we are always ready for 'Action.'" **B**



TOP: ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION AND CONDUIT INSTALLATION AT THE VARSONA THEATRE (DESIGN ASSIST PROJECT WITH PCL CONSTRUCTION).
MIDDLE: ACTION'S SERVICE TECHNICIANS PERFORMING EXTERIOR LIGHTING MAINTENANCE AT SHELL CANADA.
BOTTOM: ACTION ELECTRICAL'S TEGG TECHNICIANS COMPLETING ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE SERVICES.