



BUSINESS FEATURES

Brick By Brick

Forming a Partnership

By Colleen Sheehy Orme



Jesse Lefkowitz

In Michael Jordan's freshman year at UNC, Coach Dean Smith said, "Michael, if you can't pass, you can't play." A nod to the essential nature of teamwork. Be it work or play, if individual positions are not carried out generously for the team, there may not be that extra bucket or buck.

Doug DeLuca, of [Federal Stone and Brick LLC](#) in Sterling, knew he wanted to take his company a tier higher. John Browning, a former Wells Fargo executive, knew he wanted to own his own business. As a kid, he had grown up in the entrepreneurial atmosphere. His parents had owned and operated a chain of restaurants.

Browning wanted to buy an existing business—a challenge in a down economy where the market is

flooded with sales. He had to look deep and dig below the surface to make sure he was investing in a solid business and not one that needed him to bail them out.

Browning was not industry specific while hunting for the business, but rather quality specific. He was looking for three characteristics. The business must be at least 10-years old, have a great reputation and have a founder that had grown the business as far as he or she could.

Browning soon discovered DeLuca. Originated in 2001, the environmental design firm was a forerunner in their industry and introduced 'outdoor living' to the Washington, D.C. area. DeLuca, a third-generation builder was an innovative and successful hardscape/landscape designer. Federal Stone and Brick fit the three characteristic criteria list. Browning purchased it in August of 2010 and formed a partnership with DeLuca.

"Growing anything, especially something you personally created, is a very rewarding experience," says DeLuca, founder and principal. "Creating a partnership has allowed me to focus more on the client and the design which has always been the force behind the company and my passion."

The two individuals recognized their extraordinarily different talents and took the business to the next level. "In the past, they did not do commercial, and now we do an extreme amount," says Browning, president and principal. "We now have the administrative support for those large jobs."

"What's been really great about the partnership is my partner is the super- creative energy behind the design work, and I am the



WHAT IT TAKES

"The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say 'I,' and that's not because they have trained themselves not to say 'I.' They don't think 'I.' They think 'we'; they think 'team.' They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don't side-step it, but 'we' gets the credit. ... This is what creates trust."

—Peter Drucker

"Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work

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corporate business guy," says Browning. "I am not going to say we are polar opposites because we share the same values and similarity in business culture. However, our skill sets are very different from each other, and what we found is that we complement one another."

Whether they are working on a large office complex, say installing exquisite, 14-foot bronze eagles by sculptor Walter Matia; importing specialty stone from Argentina to finish off water features; or creating a residential utopia, their extremely high-end expertise rolls easily from residential to commercial projects.

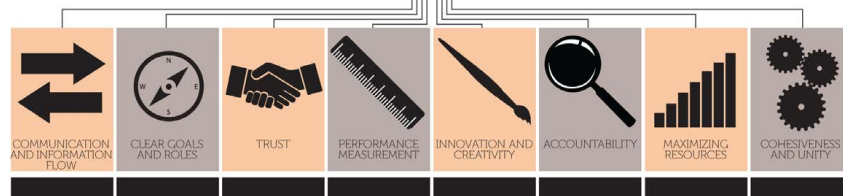
Client Mike Edwards says, "What I found with the experience was the fact that they listened. It wasn't a cookie cutter approach. They tried to reach our vision of what we wanted."

DeLuca says, "I love my clients and transforming a property. We create a lifestyle that goes beyond a terrace or a walkway." He adds, "The passion is the driving force behind the company. My goal is to grow, but never lose sight of how we got here, our clients and our designs."

Browning's take on their success: "It's really your similarities and values with your partner. If you don't share the same values, it won't work."

makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." —Vince Lombardi
"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." —Andrew Carnegie

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