

Exponent staff writer John Hummer

Have truck.

Will travel.

That's how Carl Evanson started his business – A Plus Electric – 10 years ago. “It was me and a truck,” he said. “I had no customers and nothing but experience. I pretty much went door to door.”

Fast forward 10 years and his business has grown exponentially to serving 55-60 jobs per week on average. A Plus now has 15 employees and a building on the corner of Hyde Road and Jefferson in Clarklake that serves as the company's headquarters. The building was formerly an Onsted Bank.

“We really, really like this location,” said Evanson. “We are here to stay.”

The company services the area from Ann Arbor to the south side of Lansing, to the east side of Battle Creek, as well as some of Hillsdale and Adrian.

“We've grown and have had a great response from the community,” he said.

Though his company will take on larger jobs, Evanson said their focus is on service.

“Most of the people in this industry don't deal with the small stuff. We have made that a priority. Some of our competitors that primarily do large jobs will send work our way. We're very respectful of our competitors.”

A Plus will deal with everything from faulty light switches, to blown fuses, to rewiring houses.

“That service market of people that have these lists is a very important part of this business. It's helped make us successful for 10 years. I feel the opportunities for this business are endless.”

The emergency market is another area that Evanson said his company specializes.

“We do a lot of fire restoration work. A lot of it's residential. We've been to two houses where the electrical system has been of fire. We shut down the house and made it safe.”

Evanson mentioned a scenario about a month ago on Robinson Road in Jackson where a heavy wind and thunderstorm hit.

“It just destroyed that area,” he said. “We were there for three days with six crews and barely put a dent into it. We'll enter a neighborhood that has had a bad storm, and people just come out of the woods.”

Evanson is also proud of his company's newly revamped web page, complete with an emergency button. When clicked, it immediately calls A Plus's office line, which is answered 24/7.

“We found with storm damages and power outages, it has really been an asset to us to be able to get to people. We're ready; we just needed a way for people to find us. When there's a storm, a flood, a problem – my goal is for us to be the name they think about calling.”

From being there when people need his company most has resulted in more business through referrals.

“You find yourself having a new relationship with people when you are there at that point in their life,” Evanson said. “You see the desperation of losing everything and having to rebuild.”

He calls it relationship-based contracting.

“Most our employees know [family member or friend] of customers that we’ve been working with for 10 years.”

Evanson earned a bachelor’s degree in marketing from Central Michigan University. During his college years he did electrical work during the summer and took classes at Jackson College after working a 10-hour day.

“Nobody ever told me the trades were an option.” Until his dad gave him the “after college” talk.

“When I graduated from college, my father said ‘Here’s your options: You can go work for the big company or you can get your license and potentially have your own business.’ That was one of the best pieces of advice he had given me. People don’t look at the trades as an opportunity – to own your own business, to be your own boss, to choose how you want to operate your business. I made the choice to get my license, and by 25 I had a license and a college degree. By 30, I started my own business.

“Now I am a trades person. I work with my hands, I problem-solve. That is the enjoyment of this job – to go somewhere and solve a problem. It doesn’t get any better than that – to walk away with a sense of accomplishment. It’s been an amazing ride.”

You can find A Plus Electric at apluselectricpro.com or 529-0000.