



Xavier de la Rosa and Frank de la Rosa

Co-owners
FX Concrete
Fort Worth

The steps Xavier de la Rosa has taken in faith have been cast in concrete. When opportunity knocked in 2010, it was his drive, his father's faith in him and his belief in himself that led their business, FX Concrete, to become a solid success. In six years, de la Rosa has expanded FX Concrete to include two additional supporting companies, and he strives to learn more about the industry so that he can make – and take – his next concrete step.

How were you introduced to the construction industry?

My dad, Frank, is from Mexico and when he came to the United States in the 1970s, that's when he became involved in construction. He did a lot of high-rise work as a laborer. During the summer, he brought me out to the job sites when I was pretty young so that I wouldn't be lazy and sleep all day!

When I turned 10, I went out with him to job sites and pretty much worked full-time in concrete construction during the summer.

When I was in high school, I had other jobs during the school year, but when summer came, I still did concrete construction. When I graduated, I did it full time and by that time I was already running \$5-\$8 million jobs. I'm fortunate that I started doing this early; there are a

lot of things about this business that school can't teach you and that experience does.

Did you know when you were young that you wanted to be in construction?

Actually, in high school I did Auto CAD, won awards and was accepted to Texas Tech. For me, reading blue prints was even easier than reading a book; it came naturally to me. I had planned to be an architect, but when I looked at my options, I figured I would be 60 before I started making the money that I wanted; I could make more money doing construction. I started travelling all over the United States doing concrete construction of multi-family apartment complexes, but I always wanted more. I was always asking my boss questions; I wanted to learn because I didn't know what a bid was, or even a quote.

Around that time, in 2009, the economy started going down in Texas and layoffs occurred. The company laid off my dad but kept me, another man and some laborers because we were in the middle of the Legacy Four project in Plano. I was feeling down. I wanted to open up another company; it's always been a goal of mine to build something that would allow me to take my dad away from working for someone else and make it so that he could retire someday.

Even though my dad had found work with another company, I went to him and we opened FX Concrete in March 2010. So when I wasn't working on the Legacy Four project, I was doing driveways and patios with my brother and another guy; it was three of us running around Dallas at 2 o'clock in the morning, pulling a trailer with a Bobcat behind me and grabbing jobs after hours.

When did you start focusing on FX Concrete full-time?

On Nov. 1, 2010, I got a call from my boss that he was shutting the doors of the business and telling everyone to pack up and go home. We were right in the middle of the Legacy Four project, so I told everyone at the company to wait while I talked to the general contracting



company owner. I told him that I was the one running his job, that I had the equipment and the labor employees who had just been laid off and I could finish the project for the same cost he had negotiated with my boss. I went in blindly, not knowing their numbers, but we finished Legacy Four, which was a \$400,000 project.

What do you remember feeling at the time?

I remember when my boss first sent me to work on Legacy Four, my wife at the time was concerned I wasn't drinking enough water in the heat, and so I made her a video at the job site to show her I was. My truck was parked at a job site next door that would become Legacy Five. I recorded myself talking about how much I loved the job, the process of cutting the dirt with tractors everywhere. Then I mentioned that I wished the project was my own. Little did I know that a couple of months later the Legacy Four job was going to be mine and the future Legacy Five job site where my truck was parked was going to be FX Concrete's first start-to-finish job as well.

It was amazing how that worked out. We actually had a company meeting recently where I played that video for everybody.

What was it like to see that video of yourself?

Amazing. I was 28 when I started the Legacy Four job. I could take myself back to the time when I made that video and what I felt at that time. I remember what I was doing that day and who I was meeting with. It was a good feeling to look at that video and look at where I'm at now.

What advice would the Xavier of today give the 28-year-old Xavier?

Keep doing what you're doing. It's going to work out in your work life .., but in your personal life, it's about to get rough with the woman you're with!

Xavier! Ahem, moving on ... so you successfully finished Legacy Four and won the project located next to it?

Legacy Five was right next to it and I told Amicus Construction to give me a chance and he did. That's when I pulled Frank from where he was working. We knocked Legacy Five out of the park, even though the construction company was concerned about hiring us.

Why were they concerned?

When it came to doing the actual concrete portion of the job, they had no questions; they knew we could do it. But I only knew how to do the construction side, I had no idea how to run an office, such as how to track invoicing and everything that comes with that. The construction company had to trust us.

So you went from running a side business to operating a full-blown company overnight. Were you nervous?

No ma'am! I was excited as hell!! I do not let stress get to me at all. The way I

see it is, all of this is still going to be here tomorrow, so hey, let's figure this out.

We did really get stretched out [financially] during Legacy Five, and my dad put up a lot of money out of his own pocket – and he didn't know which way this thing was going to go. I had never bid on a job before, and I didn't know if the numbers were right. But it's a hump you have to get over; you can't be afraid to push over that. Tons of people will get to that hump and throw up their hands and say they're done. But they're right there, and if they don't push themselves over that hump, they'll never see the other side.

That's just business; you have to spend a lot of money to make a lot of money. I just kept going to him every week, asking him for more money, \$10,000, \$15,000, \$30,000, telling him we were almost there. It was a lot to ask for, plus it was a while before we were paid, but he supported me 100%. Once we got that check, I was able to pay him back and everything started rolling like clockwork from there.

I hope you bought your dad something very nice for Father's Day that year.

The company he had worked for had given him a company work truck, a GMC Denali 3500, but had to file bankruptcy and take the truck back. When we started FX Concrete, I told him to give me one year and that I would buy him that truck because of his faith in me. Eight months and two jobs later, I went down to the dealership and bought him a 2013 GMC Denali 3500. And, I just bought him a 2017 Denali a few weeks ago. I'm still driving my 2006 Dodge, but that's because it has sentimental value.

What has this journey taught you?

There have been a ton of lessons. As far as regrets, do I have any? Meh. You can't regret what you do, you can just learn from it. You have to be happy with the decisions you make, even if they are the wrong ones.

How has the company changed over the years?

Besides FX Concrete, we've also opened FX Equipment and FX Materials, which supplies concrete to FX Concrete. We have six concrete mixers and a mobile batch plant that will produce and provide concrete to our jobsites.

What do you do when you aren't working?

I work! Free time is mainly with my kids and friends, but most of my free time is taken up with work.

Now that we have the mobile batch plant, I'm reading up on the chemical side of it and learning the science behind it. Even though I've been doing this a long time, I don't know everything. I just have to do everything I can to become knowledgeable and to learn.

FX Concrete offers turnkey concrete construction for multi-family and commercial buildings and structures. –mjm

