

ARIZONA BUSINESS THE BUSINESS RESOURCE GAZETTE

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MARK HENLE/ARIZONA BUSINESS GAZETTE

With Ductz, Vince DiVarco said he has emphasized customer service and getting every detail right every single time. He thinks this is why his company has survived during such a bad economy.

SERVICE TO SERVICE

Ex-Navy officer an AC ventilation specialist

By Georgann Yara
SPECIAL FOR THE ABG

When Glendale business owner Vince DiVarco told his parents he had become a Ductz franchise owner, the Navy lieutenant commander and veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom had some explaining to do.

His parents were not aware their son was the new owner of a company specializing in the cleaning and repair of heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems. The business' name made it sound like he had taken a job in the pet-care industry.

"My mom said, 'What? You're going to be cleaning

ducts?' My dad's in the background saying, 'I didn't know they had to be cleaned,' " DiVarco said with a chuckle as he recalled the conversation that took place four years ago.

DiVarco quickly discovered there were similarities between his military career and

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Ex-Navy officer is building business on service

DUCTZ

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his new one. Working outdoors in intense heat was among them. The 12-year Navy veteran and reserve officer was in charge of loading people and ammunition on and off transportation vehicles while stationed in Kuwait, where temperatures easily climbed into the 120s.

Supervising others was another common denominator that made the transition between two seemingly different careers easy, although DiVarco had no prior experience in the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning industry.

"But I had military experience in managing. The business part I understood," said DiVarco, who has an economics degree from the University of Arizona and had run businesses in the logistics and food and beverage industries.

After returning home in 2006 from his second deployment to the Middle East, DiVarco worked for a Scottsdale transportation company that went out of business in 2007.

DiVarco decided to pursue his longtime dream of being his own boss.

"It was time for me to put up or shut up," he said. "I told my wife all the time, 'I should be owning my own business.' The stars were aligned."

DiVarco discovered Ductz and made an effort to emphasize customer service and getting every detail of every job right every single time, he said. He believes this is the reason his company has survived the economic struggles that have claimed other small businesses.

At first, his choice was criticized by those who questioned whether his venture could survive the nation's financial woes.

"Every day, someone told me I was nuts," DiVarco said. "I didn't know what the economy was going to bring me, but I believed in the product and believed in my ability to bring that service. That's been my saving grace."

To accommodate ramifications brought on by the housing-market decline, DiVarco has shifted his focus from working on new homes to foreclosure homes, providing more services to banks or people who purchased the homes. He also has several commercial clients, including a government contract with the Air Force.

DiVarco said he has done

DUCTZ of North Phoenix and Deer Valley

Where: 20280 N. 59th Ave., Ste. 115-640, Glendale.

Employees: 6.

Interesting stat: U.S. military veterans own 9 percent of all businesses nationwide, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Details: 623-466-8625.

work for a few high-profile clients who do not want it made known that his services were needed.

Sometimes, these clients require a confidentiality agreement from DiVarco not to disclose this information until after the work is done.

"People have gotten used to me saying, 'I'm going to be busy on a project, but I can't tell you about it,'" he said.

For more than two years, Fadel Ghadanfar has used DiVarco to do air-duct cleaning jobs for his Scottsdale company, Desert Comfort Mechanical.

Ghadanfar said he likes it that DiVarco's company is licensed

"These guys are always ready to work and always with a smile on their face. ... Vince is honest, caring, dedicated and very passionate about his work."

Fadel Ghadanfar

Owner of Desert Comfort Mechanical, referring to Vince DiVarco of Ductz

to do such cleaning even though the state does not require it.

Ghadanfar said Ductz is one of the few businesses that meet his high quality standards for service and is able to recommend.

"These guys are always ready to work and always with a smile on their face," he said. "It doesn't matter what job it is. Vince is honest, caring, dedicated and very passionate about his work."

DiVarco's fast response to emergency situations is one reason Anthony Piazza, general manager of Belfor Property Restoration, has used his company for the past three years.

Piazza, who manages the company's Tucson office, has called DiVarco when problems occurred at hospitals, elderly-care facilities and schools, where damaged systems could create unhealthy living conditions if not repaired quickly.

"I can call Vince at 2 a.m., and he can have guys on-site within 45 minutes," Piazza said. "It's impressive that a guy who spends so much time serving his country in the reserves finds time to make sure we are still taken care of."

In addition to Ductz, DiVarco oversees Hoodz International, a franchise that specializes in commercial kitchen-exhaust cleaning that he purchased in January.

Between both businesses, his military obligations and spending time with his wife and children, spare time is a luxury that often eludes DiVarco.

And he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I do the best job I can and take it one day at a time," he said. "Reservists do it every day. Some juggle two, three different jobs. I'm hardly a special case. It's just the way I've always been — running full-speed ahead."