

# DJ Brown and the Value of Collaboration



## As lead technician in the San Diego Office, DJ Brown has one goal: Help the job run smoothly.

“Communication is the key,” says DJ. “We all want the same thing: To get the job up and running properly. So, it’s really important that everyone is talking, so we can stay on the same page. When I talk with the contractor, I always want to know: Where do we want to start? What’s the most important fire we need to put out?”

Dwayne Brown adopted the nickname DJ to make sure he wasn’t confused with his father. His dad was a 15-year Trane employee and an avid HVAC industry and company promoter. DJ was in college studying computers, but he wasn’t sure what he wanted to do with that. His father had ideas.

“My dad was always saying, hey, a job in HVAC

is a good opportunity,” says DJ. “It’s more than just mechanical things, and you can apply your knowledge. I was getting that every night at dinner. I was a little sick of it at the time, but it turned out to be the best thing I could have done.”

When DJ started at Trane’s San Diego office, at 23, he knew almost nothing about the HVAC industry, but he was eager to learn. He started in the shop, delivering parts to sites, and performing other duties, but he soon discovered he had a precious opportunity – he could visit different jobs, meet contractors, lend a hand when appropriate and learn the business from the bottom up.

“When you’re the shop guy, you’re going to have a lot of downtime,” says DJ. “I would do a delivery, and I’d call or text and say: ‘Hey, can you guys use a hand?’ Then I’d arrive on their site, and they would watch over my shoulder while I worked on things.”

## Focus on Teamwork

DJ went back to school to study HVAC, gaining new information all day long, and was soon working on high-profile jobs. He continued to grow in the company, and now he’s a technician lead, supervising seven people.

DJ focuses a lot of his energy on supporting contractors, making sure they have everything they need to get the job done. He is constantly sharing ideas and solutions, ensuring the right equipment is in place at the job site, keeping projects moving forward.

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DJ leaves nothing to chance, speaking with the Trane account manager and others to better understand the contractor’s needs before going to the site. He then talk with the contractor to confirm their priorities. Other stakeholders, such as controls contractors, have their own input. Throughout this process, DJ, the contractor and others organize the project, determine the work order and prioritize the most pressing problems. DJ tries to keep his eyes on the big picture and the work at hand.

“My job is to ensure integrity in that relationship,” says DJ. “If I do a bad job, or I’m hard to work with, it’s absolutely going to negatively affect the next sale for the next project. Working with contractors, I need to be really focused on that communication: How can I help you? What can I do for you? What’s going to alleviate your stress?”

That approach usually pays off. DJ proudly recalls a job for a pharmaceutical company, installing a major, 100-ton unit that had to be up and running the next day. Two shifts worked for 24 hours: removing the old equipment; landing the new one; installing controls, electrical and plumbing.

“There were two teams and several contractors all working together in the same tiny space, all under a deadline,” says DJ. “With that many companies working together in a small space and having zero hiccups. It was amazing.”

## The Joy of Problem-Solving

Having worked at Trane for 17 years, DJ now has bragging rights over his father. He enjoys his livelihood and loves that he gets to work with the latest and greatest HVAC innovations. With new equipment coming out every year, he never gets bored.

But for DJ, the best part of the job is solving problems. HVAC issues are never minor. If the system isn't cooling people, they are always eager to get out from under that discomfort. If the system isn't cooling products like food, that could lead to significant losses. DJ enjoys being part of the team that makes things right.

## Giving Back

In spring 2021, DJ had the unique opportunity to speak about his career at Trane to around 100 ninth graders at Hoover High School in Glendale, California. He was pleased to do it but also felt the responsibility. He knows what it's like to be young and looking for direction. Plus, he has kids of his own, two daughters, 11 and 13.

The students were part of the school's Sustainable Academy of Building and Engineering program and came prepared with a lot of questions. He loved every minute of it.

“I was proud to be able to talk to them and maybe inspire people,” says DJ. “I think it would be great if someone from that class turns up in the HVAC business and says: I saw you in my class and it helped me. That would be everything.”

One student asked: If DJ could talk to his younger self, what would he tell him? He had to think about that for a moment. “It took me back to when I was just starting at Trane. I guess, I would tell myself not to give up, that everything is going to be okay – because it is. It's going to take some hard work, but it's going to be worth it.”



“You are kind of like a hero,” he says. “People need you, they depend on you, it's not something they can just fix by themselves. There's a lot of gratification from being able to help people that way.”



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