

Dealer Profile



1987 building and vehicles

Passion for Water

From Delivering Salt to Owning a Family Business

Quality Water Specialists

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Employees: Seven
Service vehicles: Four

Nick Naser started in the water industry at age 15, delivering salt for his dad's company. Once he graduated from high school in 1998, he decided to give the business a try and see if he liked it. He did. "I really liked the whole communication with customers. At the time I started on deliveries, I was pretty shy. I came out of my shell a little bit more, which was a good thing. It just snowballed from there. I've always had a love for the business because I enjoy a good challenge. We have very difficult water in our area." In June of 2016, after working in all aspects of the business (delivery, service, sales, quoting, marketing and management) he bought the company from his father.

Naser was born and raised in Upper Michigan, about 1.5 hours north of Green Bay, WI in the town of Powers, population under 1,000. He has lived there his whole life. His customers are typically on rural well water. "We're actually surrounded by some bigger communities to the east, west and south." Those three major markets for Quality Water Specialists have populations ranging from 8,000 to 12,000 and are within a 70-mile radius.

"After doing this for as long as I have, I still have the same passion and drive I've had all along. The job descriptions and titles have changed but I still go back and do every aspect of the business. Every day I enjoy conversing with customers to make sure they're happy. I believe this allows us to grow. We bring a lot of experience to the table dealing with difficult water, making our customers feel

comfortable with what they are getting and knowing we'll stand behind the product if something happens. The biggest joy I get out of this is the repeat customers who keep coming back or refer us to someone else. I appreciate the way our customers talk about us and the way they refer us. That's about 90 percent of our business."

Surprising good fortune

In 1984, Naser's father Steve was looking for a change after becoming bored delivering gasoline and heating oil for his father's company. He decided he wanted his own business. Coincidentally, Steve said, "I called a local water conditioning company to repair the water softener in my home and the man who came told my wife that he was going to retire and sell his business. We purchased the business with 45 salt

customers and 52 rentals."

His son added, "Nowadays, we have hundreds of rentals

and thousands of salt customers. Typically we average about 30 stops a day, five days a week. Buying the business was a big gamble and a big learning curve of course, but Dad was not afraid to get outside his comfort zone and try something. The customers were very patient and a lot of times he worked for free. That was part of the learning curve. He tackled certain situations a lot of companies wouldn't touch." Within three years, the elder Naser earned Water Quality Association certification.



By Donna Kreutz



1987 State Fair

Quality Water Specialists serves the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and northern Wisconsin. "We encounter just about everything, from three to 100+ gpg hardness and zero to 40+ ppm iron to problems with arsenic, iron bacteria, tannins, sulfur and high TDS (up to 5,000 ppm). We overcome them by installing proper-sized water treatment equipment, with great service and preventative maintenance programs. We do everything from residential to commercial and industrial, from large lab-water systems for local hospitals down to your basic water softener systems. We just finished up a big ozone project for a bottled water plant, the largest in our history."

Vast differences in water quality

"Our current challenge is a new well with arsenic levels at 3,200 ppb and an elevated thalium problem. This well also has lead levels of 167 ppb. We're working now with the well driller, the DEQ, Hellenbrand and others. The levels will vary from 3,200 down to zero then back within a certain period of time; they do not appear to be man-made. Local homeowners are also concerned about the arsenic and where it comes from. It presents a big challenge and I like that. The motivating factor that keeps me interested in the water treatment industry is the vast differences in water quality in our area."

There's plenty of room for the younger Naser to grow the family business. "Until five years ago, our computer data was still a DOS-based program instead of Windows. That's how far behind we were in technology," he said. "The program company told me 'there's only one guy left in shop who knows this program. What if he leaves or something happens?' We had to upgrade. But we still didn't have an Internet connection at the shop. Now we're working on a website, with help from the folks at Hellenbrand. We'll be able to do email forms, online payments and more communicating with customers. We're working on all that stuff and it's coming soon. This will allow us to become more efficient. We plan to expand our company into more lucrative areas."

Naser sees lots of opportunity ahead, particularly for educating consumers on proper treatment options. "There's a lot of misinformation out there. People take for granted that what comes from the ground is good. I'd say 95 percent of the problems we're called about are cosmetic. With the increased interest in water testing, we can show there are good minerals and bad minerals. Normally people want to protect their family to the best of their ability. We're educating the public and bringing awareness about higher-efficiency equipment and the savings that come with hav-



ing the proper equipment installed. We're seeing more advanced technology coming to water treatment, yet the more complicated it gets, the more it costs to maintain. It's a Catch-22. We're being very proactive about preventative maintenance."

'Show them the numbers'

"It's hard to sell a drinking water system. Up here the bottled water industry is pretty big. I want to try to convert those consumers to POU units. We also have a lot of DIYers. They say they'll get by for now, then end up buying a unit two or three times when they could have just used one of ours the whole time, paid the same amount or less and have it last another 10 years. From the cost standpoint, it makes much more sense.

"I'm a number's guy. I calculate what the customer is using, the salt consumption, the number of people in the house and what our systems can do. It makes a huge difference if you show them the numbers. Because our water can be corrosive in some areas, we're doing a lot more whole-house RO systems. We look at cost comparisons, including what the customer spends on replacing fixtures and appliances. Again, it just makes sense with these difficult water problems.

"We sell Hellenbrand's water treatment equipment, and have since 1996. We get fantastic customer support from them. Working with a great supply company makes it almost easy." In fact, it was Jeff Hellenbrand who suggested that Naser would make an interesting Dealer Profile for *WC&P*. "Growing up, I can't tell you how many times I looked at this magazine. As long as I can remember, I'd look at the dealer profiles and think 'I want to be in there someday.' I am super-stoked. This is both an honor and very humbling at the same time." ♦

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