



## As Equipment Evolves to Take on Labor Challenges, Ortiz Applies Same Business Foundations at Doggett Machinery

By Julie Devine

**A**fter 30 years in the heavy equipment business, Mike Ortiz has adapted to plenty of change, including what he forecasts as the next step – technology-rich machines that will ease the construction industry’s labor problems. But no matter how his product changed in the past or evolves in the future, Ortiz remains focused on the simple foundations of hard work and customer service.

Now Vice President of Doggett Machinery headquartered in Houston, Ortiz joined John Deere’s corporate office straight out of college and later worked for a Deere dealer in north Texas. In 2007 he joined Doggett, a company founded by Leslie Doggett in 1993.

“I saw real opportunity and vision with Leslie and the organization he was building,” Ortiz said. “When I started with Leslie he only had a small John Deere operation in south Texas, but the vision for where we were going was clear – we were going to be one of Deere’s largest dealers, and we were going to get there through a commitment to service, customer support, and uptime.”

Today, Doggett employs more than 1,500 people and has become the largest dealer in North America for three separate, first-

tier equipment manufacturers.

As Vice President, “I deal with many different facets of the business, from full profit and loss responsibility to manufacturer relations,” Ortiz said. His responsibilities include oversight of John Deere Construction and Forestry operations spanning 17 Doggett stores across Texas and Louisiana. He also oversees the company’s Link Belt crane dealerships in four Louisiana locations.

In his interview with Texas Contractor, Ortiz shares more about the lessons he learned throughout his career and the changes he sees on the horizon for contractors and construction equipment.

### What led you to a career in equipment sales?

I grew up in Jarrell, Texas, surrounded by construction and farming and was always fascinated by the equipment. After earning a bachelor’s degree in agricultural engineering from Texas A&M University, working for John Deere was a natural fit.

### What’s the best advice you ever received?

Simply to be honest and straightforward in

all of your dealings. It’s easier to remember when you tell the truth.

### What lessons have you learned in your professional life?

The biggest lesson is that business changes constantly and you have to be ready to adapt, but the way you deal with people will always remain the same. Whether it’s customers or the people you work with, you need to treat everyone in the manner you want to be treated.

### Who was the biggest influence on your career?

My father taught me about hard work, honesty, and loyalty. All those traits served me well in my career. Charlie Calhoun, one of the owners at the first dealership I worked for (now owner of Calhoun Tractor Co., Inc., in Aledo, Texas), has been a mentor for all of my career. He taught me so much of what I know about the dealership business and the sales process. Bob Brock, who was Vice President of Sales and Marketing for John Deere (now retired), taught me to analyze the details of the business in order to improve the opera-



Mike Ortiz

tions. There isn’t a day that goes by when the lessons I learned from these three men don’t come to mind.

### What professional achievement makes you proudest?

I’m extremely proud of the organization we built here at Doggett. This was no easy task. We combined three distinctly different organizations into one dealer and grew that into one of John Deere’s largest organizations. That took a lot of hard work and dedication from all of our great employees. Working with a group like that makes me very proud.

### What changes do you see ahead for the construction industry?

The world today demands more and more efficiency. Projects will continue to get bigger in scope and there will be less time to get them done. Equipment will play a huge role in this through technology enhancements and productivity increases due to size and design.

### How do you think equipment will evolve?

I think the biggest change already started – intelligent machine control. Today this involves GPS technology that monitors what a machine is doing based on where it’s located. Grade control is the primary function that’s developing. The next step I see coming is autonomous machine control. Labor is one of the biggest challenges contractors face today. If machines can help them with their labor needs by making people more productive, they’ll embrace that technology quickly.

