

Fire Reconstruction Vice President Jeff Thibodeaux Shares Industry Insights in C&R Roundtable

FRI Vice President Jeff Thibodeaux joins restoration leaders in a C&R Magazine discussion about technology, talent, customer service, and the future of the industry.



Austin, Texas Oct 7, 2026 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - The restoration industry is changing quickly. Technology is becoming more important, customers expect faster communication, insurance requirements continue to evolve, and restoration companies are facing new challenges around talent, competition, and business growth.

These issues were at the center of a recent C&R Magazine roundtable featuring industry leaders from across the restoration field, including Jeff Thibodeaux, Vice President of Fire Reconstruction Inc. The discussion, titled “The Changing Business of Restoration,” brought together industry professionals to share their perspectives on where restoration is today and where it is heading.

For Jeff, one of the most important themes throughout the discussion was that restoration cannot become so focused on technology and efficiency that it loses the human side of the business.

Jeff pointed to the growing role of documentation, moisture mapping, estimating technology, communication platforms, and insurance and third-party administrator compliance. At the same time, he noted that customers, carriers, and adjusters increasingly expect faster responses, greater transparency, and real-time communication.

His message was not that technology will replace restoration professionals. Instead, he sees technology as a tool that can help skilled people work more efficiently while allowing them to focus on decisions, leadership, and customer relationships.

“Technology can be taught, but communication, empathy, and exceptional customer service skills are developed through culture, leadership, and experience,” Jeff explained during the roundtable.

Preparing Before Disaster Strikes

Jeff also used the discussion to highlight FRI's proactive approach to restoration.

Rather than viewing restoration as a service customers need only after a disaster, [Fire Reconstruction Inc.](#) works with [commercial clients](#) and restoration partners on preparedness and emergency planning. Through its [Priority Alert!](#) and Priority Service Agreement programs, FRI provides ongoing support, training, planning, and access to digital tools designed to help businesses prepare before an emergency occurs.

Jeff emphasized that updated documentation, property inventories, photographs, and emergency contact information can improve communication and help reduce confusion and downtime when an incident happens.

That proactive mindset reflects a broader shift in restoration from simply responding to damage toward helping property owners prepare for it.

People Remain at the Center

Another major theme in Jeff's responses was the importance of people.

When asked what gives FRI an advantage that is difficult for other business models to replicate, his answer was simple: **the FRI team.**

He expanded on that idea when discussing the industry's labor challenges. FRI places a strong emphasis on training and promoting from within while recognizing employees for customer service, anniversaries, birthdays, and professional development. The goal is to give team members a place where they can build careers rather than simply fill positions.

That focus also carries into customer service.

Jeff said empathy, a solution-focused mindset, a positive attitude, strong engagement, and clear communication are central to the relationships FRI builds with customers, insurance carriers, adjusters, subcontractors, vendors, and its own team.

Independent Growth in a Changing Industry

The roundtable also examined the growing presence of private equity and larger restoration organizations.

Jeff acknowledged that increased investment has brought additional capital, resources, competition, and consolidation into the markets where FRI operates. Rather than trying to compete solely on size, FRI continues to focus on its people, relationships, quality, attention to detail, leadership, communication, and customer experience.

For Jeff, those fundamentals remain important regardless of how the industry changes.

He also offered a balanced view of the franchise-versus-independent debate. Having experience with both models, he said neither is automatically right or wrong. The better fit depends on an individual's strengths, resources, experience, and goals.

Looking Toward the Future

When asked what the ideal restoration company could look like five years from now, Jeff returned to the same principles that appeared throughout his responses: people, leadership, technology, communication, empathy, and customer service.

His vision is not simply a restoration company with more equipment or more technology. It is an organization that develops great people, uses technology intelligently, leads by example, and understands that restoration is about more than repairing a damaged property.

It is about helping restore lives, businesses, and communities.

That philosophy is closely aligned with Fire Reconstruction Inc.'s mission to leave every customer **“Better Than Before.”**



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