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How a CEO Gives Back to Aged-out Foster Youth: With Alton Butler of Line 204

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I had the pleasure of interviewing Line 204 CEO Alton Butler, who leads one of the top studio and production rental companies in Los Angeles. Alton founded Line 204 in 1997, renting all the equipment needed behind the camera for commercials, such as tables, coolers, tents, chairs, and more. Today, Line 204 also rents sound stages, lighting, and interior design for commercials, television episodes, photo shoots, and special events.



Thank you so much for doing this with us! What is your backstory?

I grew up in the small town of Anniston, Alabama where I pursued a career in football. After a dream shattering injury, I moved to Los Angeles to pursue acting. I had some success, but saw a real business opportunity in production rentals. I started Line 204 out of my garage in Studio City, renting production equipment to LA commercial units. Today, we employ over 120 people, rent stages, lighting, modern props, production equipment, and more. In 2019, we plan to expand by opening the largest studio complex in the LA area in 25 years!

Can you share the funniest or most interesting story that occurred to you in the course of your career?

Anytime my kin folk would come visit in Los Angeles, they would want to visit the Hollywood Walk of Fame, The Hollywood Sign, Universal Studios, and all of the usual tourist spots. Seven or eight years after I started Line 204, I took that trip with them again. There we were on the tram when we saw a production base camp. In the base camp there were multiple tents and coolers featuring my logos as big as day. That was a very proud and humbling moment for me.

Are you working on any meaningful nonprofit projects? How have you used your success to bring goodness to the world?

You mean besides employing all my childhood friends? All joking aside, Line 204 often supplies the production community with the bandwidth to make their humanitarian projects become a reality by donating our rentals and stages.



Can you tell me a story about a person who was impacted by your cause?

Recently, we donated furniture to A Sense of Home, a local nonprofit that creates homes for aged-out foster youth. With Line 204's donations, A Sense of Home is able to fully furnish and decorate the very first permanent homes for young adults who have emancipated from foster care.

What are your “5 things I wish someone told me when I first started,” and why?

1. **Stick with what you know.**
2. **Mistakes are growth opportunities.**
3. **Learn to cut your losses.**
4. **Surround yourself with mentors.**
5. **Take some time to relax.**



Is there a person in the world whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch with, and why?

Tony Robbins played a huge part in why I'm sitting where I am today. We have a lot of the same characteristics: we're loud, energetic, high strung, and animated. Plus, we're both advocates of cold plunges. I'd like the opportunity to tell him how he shaped me as a business man and a person, and end it with a cold plunge.

Link to article: <https://medium.com/thrive-global/how-a-ceo-gives-back-to-aged-out-foster-youth-with-alton-butler-of-line-204-4551dcd4b2bb>