



Repeat Business Systems

Dawn Abbuhl

Success Magazine: Dawn, Repeat Business Systems was founded in 1987 and since that time has delivered the highest quality technology in the office automation industry. To what do you attribute your success over the past two-plus decades?

Dawn Abbuhl: We have always been on the cutting-edge of technology, but maintained a small company feel. Even though we have seen tremendous growth over the years and are the largest independent office technology company in the Capital District and Tech Valley, our customers can and do call me directly with questions, feedback, or even just to chat! I love where I live. There are so many great people and they often turn into wonderful customers.

SM: What are your areas of expertise?

DA: John is the thinker and long range planner and I am the implementer. Technology is changing so fast and there are so many choices. I have always been able to spot the next advancement that will be right for our customers, avoiding the fads and applications that won't ultimately catch on. One of the most enjoyable areas of expertise is acquisitions. We have acquired five companies so far. I really love meeting the new staff and finding the right ways to integrate them into our company. Our company maintains a family feel even with forty-two of us. It is very important to make sure the new

"family members" feel included and part of the team.

SM: How do your services help your clients gain increases in document and workflow efficiencies while cutting costs?

DA: We were the first to provide consulting services to our customers in order to reduce costs and use technology to increase workflow efficiency. We basically analyze the cost of all of the technology used and from that information provide recommendations on what the most cost effective and efficient workflow would be. We also can help redesign workflow and recommend hardware and software to improve how companies or departments of companies work. Our customers are often very surprised at what they are currently paying for their printers for instance. We can often reduce their costs by 20% or more. It is astonishing how many expensive printers companies own without realizing the true cost of using them. In addition, we provide outsourced IT and networked services. This is also a great savings as the companies we assist do not have to pay a full-time salary or benefits. They also get the benefit of a high level systems engineer and 24/7 support for less than if they had their own internal IT person.

SM: Repeat Business Systems is very active in community donations. Why is this important to you personally?



DA: Philanthropy is the softer side of my technology business. It is fun to sell copiers, scanners, printers, IT and network services and scanning software, but supporting hospitals, facilities for homeless individuals, organizations that help children, people with addictions, etc. is much more satisfying.

SM: What are some of the ways you have contributed over the years?

DA: Several of my staff and I helped build houses for Habitat for Humanity this year. In addition to monetary donations, Repeat has also donated copiers and printers, and items for fundraising events. I am personally involved with about ten different boards. I also participate in the Albany Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneurial Assistance program which is a boot camp for new businesses as well as the mentorship program where I provide individual mentoring to an emerging professional.

SM: You are known for your unsurpassed customer service. How do you uphold that reputation with each customer interaction?

DA: That is the easiest part of our business. Everyone in the company knows that the customer comes first and making each customer happy comes before anything else. In addition, we made a decision to focus on service. We have many, many more service technicians than any other office technology company in the area. We have fourteen highly talented individuals that repair our products. Finally, we sell Ricoh copiers and since they are the best (winning awards for excellence for the last twenty years), they work the best, making our customers even happier. We have been authorized for many other brands but decided not to sell them as they were inferior to the Ricohs. Some of them were much less expensive, but our reputation was more important than the extra money we may have made.

SM: Do you sell and service products?

DA: Yes, we have four distinct divisions. First, we sell and service black and white and color copiers, and copiers that work as scanners, printers, and fax machines called multifunction copiers, printers, scanners, and fax machines. We also have an amazing IT and Network Services department where we maintain customer's computer networks, provide data backup and storage (cloud and



local storage), and also offer Virtual Chief Technology Officer and Chief Information Officer (VCIO) manpower. Our third division is our Consulting for Technology Optimization, and finally, our Software division where we offer software for electronic healthcare records, and scanning, archiving, and retrieval software. People are scanning so much now that they need an easy way to organize it so they can find what they scanned when they need it. We also offer the scanning of paper documents for people who want to turn their paper files into electronic files.

SM: How do you juggle all the hats you wear in life? Have you found it difficult to create a balance?

DA: I have a few other surprising hats in my closet. I have a doctorate in psychology and still work as a child psychologist for a limited time each week because I love it. So I watch very little TV, do yoga,

and Zumba for relaxation and exercise, go to every single one of my son's volleyball games, and am lucky enough to have a lot of friends and family in the area. Balance has to be a flexible concept from where I sit. Sometimes the balance tips more toward family, sometimes work, sometimes exercise suffers, sometimes I work out five times a week. I embrace it all, but don't allow myself to worry if one week I can't fit it all in, as I know there is a new week ahead.

SM: What advice would you give to other women considering starting a business?

DA: Find a niche that you can completely master. Find like-minded business owners that can provide advice and support. I belong to the Women President's Organization. We function as each other's board of directors and it has been invaluable to me. Also, develop a relationship with the best accounting firm and law firm you can afford. We use two amazing local companies and they have helped us navigate our business (call me if you want to know who they are ☺). Finally, surround yourself with the best person for each area of your company. When hiring, never pick the best of the bunch, keep looking until you find the absolute best person possible. Finally, always do the right thing and put others' needs before yours.



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