

FIREFIGHTERS OF NORTHEAST WISCONSIN

Sprint to the finish

As we come down the final stretch of our inaugural Firefighters of Northeast Wisconsin initiative, all three of our business owners have made dramatic strides to improve the outlook for their companies.



VAUGHN

Since we last heard about the progress of Action Painting and Carpet Care, LLC of Appleton in our July 2011 edition of New North B2B, owners June and Ruben Contreras have continued their work with Guident Business Solutions to establish their annual budget. The couple worked with Gary Vaughan, president of Guident, to identify the various profit centers of the business and establish a related cost-of-goods-sold for each profit center.

“This allows Ruben and June to calculate which revenue sources make the company the most money in the form of gross profit,” Vaughan explained.

From there, the Contreras establish a job costing process which allows Ruben to know how each specific job performed against the estimate he calculated, and to identify which jobs are most profitable. Now at the end of each month, the Contreras can compare their actual financials to their budgeted financial performance. Most importantly, Vaughan said, they can see what areas of their company need immediate attention rather than waiting months to fix a problem once it's already cropped up.

“In today's economy, making good, informed decisions is more important than ever,” Vaughan said. “Valid financial data can often be the determinant in realizing the expected outcome and being able to sleep at night.”

Since the last update on Green Bay-based IT Connexx and DVM Connexx in our August issue, the two companies have come quite a long way in exploring options for the future of the two companies. From the outset back in April, co-owners Kevin Scholz and Brian O'Shaughnessy organized a development team of their staff to help them define strategy for the future.



VAN REMORTEL

Working with Steve Van Remortel from SM Advisors in Green Bay, the development team held a host of breakthrough discussions on why a customer would choose to do business with IT Connexx compared with one of its competitors.

“The team development process got the team in their proverbial ‘underwear’ that led to some of the most candid discussions the leadership team ever had,” Van Remortel said.

After defining competencies that differentiated IT Connexx and DVM Connexx in the markets in which they both compete, the development team crafted a vision for 3 years out that all employees can use to make informed decisions, and it mapped out a functional organizational structure to achieve that vision.

“The company was on its way to stop selling vanilla ice cream,” Van Remortel said, noting the results they've experienced so far are similar to those of other companies with which he's worked.

In our October 2011 edition, we'll include a full feature length article wrapping up the Firefighters initiative and highlighting the changes each business made and what they each learned about themselves.

Methodology

New North B2B kicked off its inaugural Firefighters of Northeast Wisconsin initiative in April 2011, aimed at assisting those northeast Wisconsin small business owners who feel as if they're constantly burning the candle at both ends, putting out fires, spinning their wheels, but intent on finding a way to improve.

We put out a call for nominations back in January. In the end, our staff selected two businesses: IT Connexx of Green Bay, an IT contractor for small to mid-sized companies throughout the region, and Action Painting & Carpet Care of Appleton.

Through the generous help of Steve Van Remortel of SM Advisors in Green Bay and Gary Vaughan of Guident Business Solutions in Appleton, the two dedicated-to-improve businesses are receiving four to five month's worth of consulting at no cost to help their owners work on the strategy of growing their business rather than regularly attending to problems.

B2B is providing a monthly update on the progress of their efforts in each issue of B2B leading up to October 2011. In between issues, additional updates will be provided online at our blog newnorthb2b.wordpress.com.



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