



Ask SCORE for Business Advice

A Matter of Security

By Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

When Jerry and Janet Stephani started their business, Security Shredders, 12 years ago, the first challenge was to prove a need for their services. They had read an article in the business section of the newspaper featuring a company from California that was doing shredding and were impressed. They thought that shredding would become more and more important, but had to sell the concept.

“It was hard to convince people in 1996 that disposing of secure information was vital in order to protect a business,” Janet noted. “This was before identity theft and the need to recycle become major concerns. We were the first business in Northeastern Wisconsin to offer on-site shredding.”

They visited SCORE a number of times in order to refine their business plan and decide how to finance the business. Once these decisions were made, they began the challenging work of visiting and calling businesses to educate them on the need for securing information by shredding documents.

Using a mobile industrial size shredder, most of the shredding is done on-site. Janet says that a customer can watch the shredding for greater peace of mind. When the job is finished, the customer receives a certificate of destruction. Shredded materials are recycled.

“All businesses have occasion to discard data,” Janet explained. “Customer lists, price lists, sales statistics, drafts of bids and correspondence and even memos contain information about business activity which could interest a competitor or attract a thief.”

In addition to protecting the business, the government has stepped in to protect consumer data. Numerous laws require a business to provide reasonable security for sensitive information. Further details are available on the company’s website, securityshredders.com.

As business has increased, Janet said there are new issues to deal with. They now have two full-time drivers and a part-time sales person. Jerry works full-time wherever needed, and Janet does the office work. She also works full-time and laughs when asked about the hours spent working each week. More customers mean more time.

“The bigger our client base has gotten, the more complicated it is to manage scheduling. Communication is very important to make sure that small things aren’t missed,” Janet noted.

There are other issues including the need to look to the future and address the possibility of the predicted “paperless” society. Although the paper shredding business is steady, Janet says that they have added electronic data destruction including computer disks and hard drives. It is estimated that more than half of hard drives collected still contained recoverable data that should be protected. Security Shredders removes the hard drive and physically destroys each drive.

Other services may be added as new security issues develop. Janet says that they’ll be watching societal and industry trends so that their business can adapt. “If our business had stayed the same, we could have found ourselves out of business in ten years as the use of paper drops off,” she concluded.

If you’d like further information on starting a business, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE “Counselors to America’s Small Business.” Visit www.greenbayscore.org or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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