

Business TODAY

Several companies shaped concepts to fit work styles

By Barbara James
Dispatch Business Reporter

Excerpted from an article published August 24, 1998.

INS AND OUTS

Quantum Services Inc. Vice President Bill Sjoblom said hiring others to do what they do best makes sense, especially when his business acts as the outside expert for others.

"We ask companies to outsource to us," he said. If you do that, "you ought to be doing it yourself."

Quantum is a Columbus-based company founded in 1971 that performs inventory services for convenience stores, eliminating the stores' need to have their own staff handle the chore.

Typically, once a month, staffers go out and count, or scan, all the items in a store to check for "shrinkage."

The company's 275 employees work in 30 states and 70 cities.

"Managing that type of a work force and this type of business . . . is quite a challenge," he said. Especially when most of the workers are entry-level people and there are only 10 managers in the entire business.

So Quantum has chosen to practice what it preaches — do what it does best and outsource the rest.

"We believe overhead kills service companies," Sjoblom said. "Outsourcing keeps the overhead low and gives us the highest flexibility."

A number of key functions are handled out of house, he said. "One of the ones that is working really, really well is marketing."

"When our company was smaller, our marketing program was answering the phone. Almost all our sales were one client telling the other client," Sjoblom said.

As the company grew, marketing was handled internally. But when the company got busy, marketing took a back seat. "That doesn't serve the marketing function well," he said.

Quantum has outsourced marketing for seven or eight years, he said.

It also goes out of house for training.

Quantum has a "whole curriculum" ranging from basic orientation for new employees to a sophisticated yearlong management program for "our best people."

Sjoblom said communication is important when outsourcing work.

"The better you can communicate your expectations . . . the more information, the more detail you can give the outsourcing company and how you are going to measure the result," Sjoblom said, and the more likely the relationship will be successful.

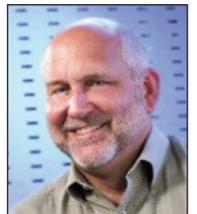
"There's an understandable fear of loss of control," he said.

"(But) we can't be experts at everything," he said. "It doesn't make sense to commit resources to something that's not your core competency."

Sjoblom said companies interested in trying it should start small.

"Start with a no-brainer," he said. "Ask, 'Why do we still do this?'" Then hire someone else to do it.

Not only does outsourcing save time, but Quantum has found it has saved money, too, 10 percent to 15 percent, Sjoblom estimated.



Bill Sjoblom,
Quantum Services

"We can't be experts at everything. It doesn't make sense to commit resources to something that's not your core competency."

BILL SJOBLOM

Quantum Services Inc.
vice president

Quantum Services

AICS, Inc.

4284 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43214

614.261.1190 (OHIO) • 800.777.9414

614.261.8166 fax

www.quantum-services.com

Reprinted, with permission, from *The Columbus Dispatch*.