

Minority Business Week

ACCUTECH NORTHWEST

Accutech Northwest is a computer networking and sales company that services the government and large corporations. It is based in SW Portland.

How did your business get started?

Steve Mauzey actually started it in 1987 and I joined him in 1993. We had been in the computer field since 1979. We got tired of working for large corporations. At some point in my career, I decided that working for myself would be the only way I could determine my future.

What was important to you in choosing a business partner?

It's extremely rare to find someone that you can totally trust your whole livelihood and life with. Trust has to be the most important thing that goes both ways. Also, there shouldn't be any personality conflicts.

You have to work as hard as the other partner. Business partnerships don't last when you're not on the same page. I see a clash there.

What were your company's growth challenges?



Native American business owner, Larry Lugo and Steve Mauzey of Accutech Northwest

It's been steady growth. We are at times ready to hire another person, but we're kind of conservative about doing that. We want anyone who works here to have a job for as long as they wish if they continue to work hard. Laying off people is something we don't want to do.

We weren't spending enough business hours on large corporations and government. We now have about 100

large customers. That's about it.

What could you have done differently to expand your business?

We could have probably done more government sales. It requires a larger cash flow. The federal government doesn't pay quickly. Five years ago, it would take them 3 to 6 months to pay.

Any advice for minority-owned

businesses?

The best thing to do in the service industry is that you have to be an expert in what you do first. If you're not, you can't survive. It's extremely competitive in this field. There are lots of very good people out there. Being mediocre in this industry is not good enough. Be an expert first.

Beginning And Successfully Operating A New Business

BY KIRBY FOX

Owning and operating your own business offers many exciting challenges: being your own boss, the prospect of earning a lot of money, or simply just doing things "your way". It also presents other, serious challenges, which not everyone is up to. Are you up to these challenges?

Slipping in any one of the areas mentioned below could do the opposite of what you wanted in the beginning. It can bring a loss in investment money, loss of face, and big-time depression. The sad truth is that more individuals or groups fail in the startup and long-term management of a business than succeed.

Forgive me if these insights below seem negative. They are intended to alert you to the dangers that await you so you can avoid them and succeed.

1. Product or Service: You may think your product or service will sell with ease. However, that's far different from knowing it will. Fundamentally, either the market wanted it, and buys it, or, when you open your doors for business you simply won't make sales. No one will need or want what you have to offer.

2. Sales, Image to Market and Marketing: Nothing happens until you sell something, no matter how good your product or service. You must be able to ask for the order, and as well, potential customers must conclude from the written materials that you are an organization of substance, capable and willing to provide the best quality value anywhere for their money.

3. Quality and Customer Service: Quality is the word for today. Customers expect it as well as lowest prices. You must be prepared to offer your very best, at the lowest possible price, while meeting all expectations of your customers in a courteous, timely, respectful way. And if they are not satisfied, you must be prepared to accept returns, or re-perform your service. Obviously, it doesn't make sense to be placed in a position to accept returns and perform a service a second time. You won't make any money. Therefore, do it right the first time, all the time.

4. Planning: If you don't plan to get where you want to go, you'll never get there. The journey to business success is full of potholes. The process begins with understanding what is important to you (your values), writing down your vision (the



Kirby Fox, founder of EXCELL

picture in your mind of what you want your future to look like), and stating what kind of business you'll be in to get there. Following this, you

*take an inventory of where you are now,
*model or design what you'll need to get where you want to go,
*and lastly, you produce an action plan (with specific timelines and who is to do what) to move you from where you are to where you want to be.

5. People Skills: Everything gets done THROUGH people. You must respect them, be sensitive to their

needs and never talk down to them. Treat them no differently than you would want to be treated. Remember that they grow and change along with your business. As a business owner, you must invest in their ongoing development. This area, far more than anything else I have experienced, presents the greatest number and variety of problems in business. Suc-

cess really hinges on your ability and capacity to deal with many, different individuals, including employees as well as customers.

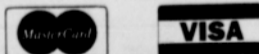
6. Pace Your Growth: Doing everything else correctly can lead to unexpected success and overwhelm you with demand for your product or service.

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