

Managed Print and Postage Solutions for New York Businesses



Ed Potrzeba Jr.
President

CEOCFO: Mr. Potrzeba, what is the focus at Ed & Ed Business Technology?

Mr. Potrzeba: We focus on providing the best service to our customers here in Upstate New York for copiers, printers, postage meters and managed print services. Our goal is 200% customer satisfaction.

CEOCFO: How does that translate day to day? What might be different dealing with Ed & Ed than a more standard company?

Mr. Potrzeba: We feel like we are in touch with our customers, our Customer Care Team answers the phones live every day from 7 am to 5 pm, and they all very knowledgeable about our business, the equipment we sell and the service we provide. Our goal when a customer calls is to handle their problem while they are on the phone, whether it be placing a service request to have a technician come out and take a look at their machine or to ship a supply order. It is quite different than calling some of our competitors, they typically use automated phone systems and you have to punch in numbers upon numbers over the phone. Our approach is more personal; a human touch with knowledgeable people, and that seems to really work well for us. I would say the biggest difference is our on-site service is really awesome! If you look on our website under the reviews section, almost daily we get comments back from our customers. Most companies say their service is great but we take it one step farther. We say our service is great and we have the data to back it up. That data comes from electronic surveys that go out after every on-site service visit, which we do over 12,000 visits a year. The survey data is then fed into the Net Promoter Score system and we are ranked against thousands of companies on a national level. We continually rank in the top percentile of the Net Promoter Score system.

CEOCFO: Are you representing the companies that own the different equipment you are servicing, or is it more direct relationships with the customers?

Mr. Potrzeba: We represent major manufacturers, so we are the local distribution and service channel between the manufacturer and the end user.

CEOCFO: Is the end user able to request you or is it more geographic?

Mr. Potrzeba: It is more geographic. You are authorized or franchised in certain counties, regions or states by the particular manufacturer you represent.

CEOCFO: Why is it important to you to provide high quality? Do the companies you represent understand?

Mr. Potrzeba: The founder of the company, which happens to be my father, Ed Potrzeba Sr., worked for a national Fortune 500 company that sold similar products. Their service was poor at best, and being a salesman for them, he was out promising his customers great service and then getting phone calls from customers saying the service techs has not showed up for days was very discouraging. Time and time again, that sort of beats you down. One day, he looked himself in the mirror and said he could not do this to his customers. He was basically misrepresenting, telling them they were going to get service when it was not happening. Shortly after Sr. responded to an ad in the New York Times from Friden Mailing Equipment Co. looking for agents to sell their equipment. He started Ed & Ed in 1977 with the goal of providing service like you would want to be serviced if you were spending your money. That is really the driving force of why we give really good service. We want the customer to feel good about the money they are giving us to maintain their equipment. When they call, they should get what they bartered for. They should get good service like we said we were going to do. That is something my father pounded into each and every one of us over the years while he was active in the business – the customer is the reason why we are here. Never lose sight of that. We should know more about their

equipment than they do. When a customer calls for service or supplies you should help them as fast as you can so they can get back to their business. They do not need to know what model they have or what the item number is, just tell them you will ship their order out today, you will have it tomorrow, and thanks for your business. He was adamant about that. If he ever heard any of our staff asking what type of ink they want, or what their model number was he would be very upset. That was our job, to research the equipment that was on a customer's file and take care of it because the customer has more important things to do. It was really his philosophy of just making sure the customer was taken care of the way he would want to be taken care of if he was giving his hard-earned money to a company. There is nothing worse in the world than spending your hard-earned money and not getting the value back. We never want our customers to feel that way.

CEOCFO: *Are you able to do more over the phone than before?*

Mr. Potrzeba: No - we really are a feet-on-the-street type of company. I would say that is 95% of our work is on-site in the customer's office. That is really where we function best.

CEOCFO: *Do you see that continuing?*

Mr. Potrzeba: As long as we are still putting ink on paper, applying postage to envelopes and still mailing letters, I think there is going to be a need for knowledgeable responsive on-site service. These are delicate machines and it is just something that is really difficult to maintain or repair over the phone or a web interface. We do see the manufacturers offering us some solutions to do software updates via the internet to the machine. I think that is great, but there is still something to be said about the technician going on site, doing the visit, plugging the laptop in and doing the software update and talking to the customers about how things are going and asking if there are any other issues with the machine, maybe a touch more personal than coming in over the internet.

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CEOCFO: *When you are hiring, you need people who understand the philosophy of Ed & Ed. What are the intangibles you seek?*

Mr. Potrzeba: That is a difficult question, and it is difficult to find individuals who mesh with our culture. Usually after a couple months we have a good idea and a good understanding if they really believe in what we are doing and if they really want to be a part of it. Some of the key factors we look for are; self-motivation, a willingness to help others outside of their department, great organization skills, and a positive attitude. We really look for people who are willing to go the extra mile to put our customers first. It takes the right person to get over a job description and just put the customer first, and that is what we look for. If they are a sales person and they have to deliver a toner cartridge today because the customer is out of toner and they cannot wait for UPS tomorrow, but they do it with no problem, those are the types of things that make us shine over our competition – where we feel like they are a team player and they can help us reach our goal by giving our customers 200% customer satisfaction. It takes a while, and they are very difficult to find. We feel we have the best team in Upstate New York. I go to work every day knowing I am working with the best of the best!

CEOCFO: *Tell us a little about the managed print services. Is that a growing area?*

Mr. Potrzeba: That is a growing area for us. Some of the industry analysts say that manage print services is dead and that it is yesterday's news. In upstate New York I think we are a little slower to change. We have done very well with MPS (managed print services). I think what a lot of organizations do not realize how much they spend putting ink on paper. With the invention of the desktop printer being so inexpensive and available at major retail outlets and the web, the printer has taken over the office environment. Our ed-Print managed print services offers a complete analysis and inventory of a customer's print environment. The number of devices they have, how many pages each devices prints monthly, and more importantly how much they are actually spending. We analyze all of the customer's data and give the customer an easy to read snapshot of their printing environment. Now a customer understands how much it costs to print a page, now it becomes manageable. Then our ed-Print team develops a program that can save anywhere from 15% to 30% of their existing print costs to manage their existing printers. We are a little different than a lot of the other providers. We feel that most organizations have enough printers in their environment. They might not have the right ones in the right locations, but we can move them around to reduce their cost and give them a tangible at the end of the month or quarter. Usually a perfect example is the president of the company will probably have the nicest printer in the organization. That is just the way it is, although maybe in the accounting department where they are printing their invoices, they might have the least expensive printer that is costing them the most per page to run. If we simply say to the president of the company that if we switch these printers, we could save you 15% to 30%, which could be \$200 to \$300 per month. Usually the managers, presidents and owners do not care about the printer in their office. If they could save \$200 to \$300 per month, that

tangible is pretty important to them. They just do not really understand it. When we show it to them in those three steps, we manage their print. Ninety-five percent of the time, they do not have to spend one penny on a printer. They have what they need; it just needs to be managed. We take care of some big groups, and it is amazing the amount of print they do and the amount of money they are now saving.

CEOCFO: *What is next?*

Mr. Potrzeba: We are looking to expand into managed network services. I do not know if we will offer a full managed network services program, but we do see a gap in services being provided in the market place. We have many customers that just struggle with basic IT work.

CEOCFO: *Ed & Ed was recognized on the 2015 Best Companies to Work For in New York State List. How are you making your employees so happy that you are on that list?*

Mr. Potrzeba: It is quite an honor and we are very pleased! We felt by applying for this status was a win win. If we were the best – lets celebrate! If we were not than lets learn from the data to make our employees 200% satisfied. When my father worked for a Fortune 500 company, he felt that he was just a number. When he started this business, he wanted the employees to feel like they were an important part of the business. We never lose sight of that. Everyone has input and everyone's suggestions are taken to heart, we listen and we have an open-door policy, so it is really a family oriented, fun, relaxed atmosphere. We do many neat things, for example we will have birthday celebrations for every employee on their birthday. They get a card, a small gift, and a birthday cake. Whoever is in the building that morning comes in and we sing happy birthday to them. We have employee tenure awards; we have a 1 year, 5 years, 10 years, 15, 20 and 25. We are on our third 25th year employee award! Most of our employees have been with us for over 12 years. We have recently remodeled our building, and we put a full café in for our employees. We want to have a relaxed atmosphere, there are no scheduled breaks – you can break whenever you want. We also built an employee lounge that has cable TV, Xbox, and comfy retro furniture. Anytime they want a little break, they can go to the lounge and read a book, text, go on Facebook, or watch TV. We encourage it, and that is something that is different than it was 10 years ago. I am still pushing and preaching to the managers that work for me to encourage the staff to use the lounge. They are not going to get in trouble for going in there and playing a game of Xbox with another employee during work hours. I know they are working harder and longer than we ever have to give the type of service that our customers demand. Take a break, get that breather! We constructed an outdoor employee pavilion, so in the summer they can enjoy lunch outside, complete with a barbeque, lounge chairs and picnic tables. The remodel goal was employee comforts and efficiencies. We have a family atmosphere, and we really try to cater to our employees. We want them to be happy! It can be difficult to compete with the Fortune 500s as far as monetary benefits. We can come close, but I think some of the extras we do make people want to work for us.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine



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