

EYE ON BUSINESS: Reed Security focuses on customer service

Ten years ago, Virgil Reed was selling security systems for a large firm from outside Saskatchewan. He often found it hard to convince Saskatoon buyers their needs would be best served by a company based out of province.

"As a sales rep, I noticed their model wasn't appropriate for Saskatoon," said Reed. Customers would sometimes have to wait two weeks to get security systems installed or repaired, with technicians coming in from out of town.

Reed saw an opportunity and founded Reed Security. Ten years later, with more than 2,000 customers, he still sees customer service as their main selling point.

"The client experience with Reed Security is if you need a technician that day, he's there," he said. He has turned down offers from clients that wanted systems installed in locations across the country because he knew they wouldn't be able to provide the same level of service.

Last year, the company was nominated for Small Business of the Year as part of the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce's annual SABEX awards. Reed was quick to point out that all three nominees in the category also got nods for Best Customer Service.

Part of satisfying clients is employing people they recognize as competent and professional.

"We have good technicians that we pay well. I've invested a lot in training," said Reed, noting that he makes sure his workers are certified at levels above what is required for the equipment they use.

Equally important is Reed's dedication to staying at the forefront of technology in the industry. He has developed an extensive network of contacts through industry events. Last year, he was the first to bring HD surveillance cameras to Saskatoon.

"We were 10 months ahead of the next company for HD," he said.

He saw an opportunity to attach his brand to the new technology and started offering cameras under the label Reed HD.

"This is the changing face of the industry and I jumped on it," he said.

The new cameras record images at 10 megapixels, compared to 0.3 megapixels in standard surveillance cameras. They can recognize a license plate from 500 to 1,000 feet away, or pinpoint the seat number of a rowdy fan from across a stadium.

"You can even read serial numbers off of dollar bills," said Reed. Law enforcement officials have told him the cameras make their jobs much easier. Reed Security has experienced 10 per cent growth in each of the last seven years.

"Our name is getting more and more awareness," said Reed. He remembers times only a few years ago when he would be one of several



Virgil Reed, owner of Reed Security, says his company was the first to bring HD surveillance cameras to Saskatoon

quotes being considered when a new building was going up in the city.

"Over time we've become the first quote," he said.

With Saskatoon growing, Reed is constantly on the lookout for new opportunities.

"We drive the city every week," he said. Being local, he has been able to make connections that allow him to get in touch with people before his competitors.

"Between three phone calls, you can usually find out who is building," said Reed. New developments are a great opportunity to develop long term relationships.

"When people are building new buildings, they're taking a big risk. When they're spending \$1 million, they're usually open minded about spending \$20,000-30,000 to protect their investment," he said.

Larger security firms like the one Reed used to work for have noticed his success. In the last three years, Reed has been approached a few times about the possibility of selling his company. He has respectfully declined all such offers and won't be retiring for quite awhile.

In fact, last year Reed made his first corporate acquisition when he purchased a small security firm and took on one of their technicians.

"I love what I do," said Reed. He enjoys watching technology improve, and has seen the industry advance to places that used to be possible only in fiction.

"Nowadays, we have some of the technologies that were make believe on TV shows," he said. ■