Exploring the business of “Unwavering Love and Commitment to Your Craft.”

Interview

What do you feel it takes to be a successful entrepreneur and how do you embody these qualities?

You have to an unwavering love and commitment to your craft. If you are not 110% devoted to making your business as successful as it could possibly be, it won't. I have been in business with Saint Louis Closet Co. for 20 years now and I still love it just as much today—if not more—than I did at the beginning.
What have been the most surprising aspects of running Saint Louis Closet Company?

One of the most surprising aspects of running Saint Louis Closet Co. would be the power of word-of-mouth. A huge portion of our business comes from referrals, which is why my first goal above all other things is to make sure the customer is completely satisfied with their experience with my company.

How has your company weathered the past few years?

It has been a difficult few years, with the recession, but as many of my competitors have gone out of business, we are still going strong. Again, I have to thank our repeat customers and the referrals that they have given us to keep us going strong. Also, having a phenomenal group of employees has been key as well. All of my employees are so dedicated to their jobs and the growth of the company, and without that commitment there would be no way we'd be doing as well as we are right now.

What are the greatest obstacles your company faces?

The economy is the greatest obstacle my company faces. Custom closets are a luxury item, which can be a difficult business to be in when the economy is down. Keeping our name out there and fresh in people's minds is an absolute necessity, and luckily that customer service I have referenced numerous times has been the best thing to help overcome that obstacle.

What do you feel the next five years will look like for your company?

I am extremely optimistic for the next five years. With the economic recovery underway, already business has started to grow again, so I'm looking to grow even more in the next five years.

Who/what are the influences of your innovation strategies?

I try to stay ten steps ahead of my competitors, so I am constantly researching new technologies, new ways to market to and reach our customers as well as keeping a close ear to the streets to see new trends that are taking place not only in my industry but other similar industries.
How does your company continually innovate with a product that is seemingly constant?

You have to continually reinvent yourself, expand relevant product lines and figure out ways to meet the customers' demands. For example, today we sell more Murphy beds than anything. That was not the case last year at this time, but because it has been booming, we've added a second mattress size option. You just have to keep your eyes and ears open and respond to what your customers are demanding.

How does being a private company (as opposed to a publicly traded company) alter your innovation strategies?

We are much more able to act quickly. If we see something that we need to adjust or add, we can just do it, rather than having to go through a chain of people, committees and boards, which could take a lot of time. The more hands in the pot, the more difficult it becomes to make decisions and get things done. Being a private company allows us to really do whatever we want in terms of innovation.