



Dealership Profile: Lineage

Company focuses on adjacencies; company culture

by: Elizabeth Marvel, Office Technology Magazine

With a long history in the mailing business, AIMED and BTA member Lineage has experienced tremendous growth over the years. Lineage President Richard Williams attributes the business's success to continuously expanding the company's offerings.

Williams' parents, David and Anna, bought the company's first offices in Buffalo and Rochester, New York, in 1984. It was a Friden (now Neopost) dealership and, at the time, had five employees, 500 customers and was losing money.

Under David's management, Lineage went through several acquisitions, purchasing companies in Little Rock, Arkansas, Lenexa, Kansas [a suburb of Kansas City, Missouri], Charlotte, North Carolina, and North Carolina's Triad region. Today, the company, which is the largest Neopost dealership in the United States, has grown to \$18 million in annual revenue with about 105 full- and part-time employees, and more than 10,000 customers. Some of its largest accounts include PepsiCo Inc., R.J. Reynolds, UMB Bank and Dillard's Inc.

Williams grew up in the business, starting as a janitor in Lineage's Buffalo office in 1984. He worked part time in the admin, service and sales departments while in school, and joined the business full time in 1991. Williams worked as a sales manager and then as general manager in the Buffalo office while his father expanded the business. He then served as vice president of sales and marketing and, in 2009, became the company's president. In January 2016, Williams purchased Lineage from his parents.

Lineage was solely in the mailing industry until 2012, when it purchased a Konica Minolta dealership to sell MFPs. It then expanded into outsourcing (printing and mailing pieces for customers) and disaster recovery. This was the beginning of the company's movement into adjacent markets.

"Our mission statement is: Transforming business-critical communications from creation to distribution," Williams says. "We do that through software, hardware and outsourcing. We're really able to meld together a perfect solution for a client."

To create these perfect solutions for clients, Lineage offers copier/MFPs and printers; mailing systems; addressing systems; inserters; paper cutters; folders; letter openers; and, most recently, parcel lockers. The company also sells software and solutions, offering outbound shipping (ProShip) and inbound



Richard Williams

receiving (WTS) software, document management software and managed print services. Lineage also does mail presorting and outsourcing at its Lenexa location, creating and mailing 200,000 to 300,000 pieces of mail per day.

Williams has plans to incorporate IT services and other adjacencies as well. "That's [IT services] really the next area where I'd like to go," he says. "I'll more than likely acquire because that's not my expertise ... But he or she who controls the IT [in a company] controls the equipment. Why wouldn't I want to control that space? If you get into the IT side with security and that sort of thing, it's a market that is showing phenomenal growth."

"We'll continue to be a business-to-business company, focusing on sales and service, but ... we'll leverage the business-to-business relationship," he continues. "That's the thing you have to think about: 'How do I leverage the relationships that I have with my current customers and with the next adjacent space I could move into to continue to grow my business?' When I say 'adjacent,' I mean something that touches the document. I don't care what form the document takes, whether it is paper or digital."

The diversity of the company's products and services is not the only thing that sets Lineage apart; its company culture is also unique. "Our purpose statement is to honor God by serving, supporting and caring with excellence," Williams says. "But I tell my employees, 'You don't have to believe in God to work here. The only thing I ask is that you serve, support and care with excellence. If you can do that, you can work here forever.'"

Williams also set up caring teams — mini boards of directors made up of representatives from each part of the business — in each office. "If an employee runs into a tough spot, financially or otherwise, he or she can go to the caring team members and they will listen to what the employee has to say," he says. "The caring team, which has a budget, will make a decision on how it is going to help the employee. It could be a gift of money, a loan or a combination of the two. It could be counseling. But the point of the caring team is to care for our employees financially, spiritually and emotionally. Our employees knew that we cared *about* them, but they didn't know there was a way that we could care *for* them ... So it's a caring culture that we've brought into our company." ■

Elizabeth Marvel is associate editor of Office Technology magazine. She can be reached at elizabeth@bta.org or (816) 303-4060.

