

PROFILE

Mark McCurry of AQuickDelivery



Founded in 1987 and acquired by Mark McCurry in 1997, AQuickDelivery is the leading same day courier and messenger service in Atlanta and the surrounding areas. With more than 100 drivers and personnel, Mark, along with his partners Lon Fancher and Scott Moller, manage more than \$400,000 per month in sales and hundreds of clients. Clients range from the printing industry to healthcare, and packages range from envelopes to pallets. With the leading technology, small through large vehicle types and an ongoing focus on superior customer service, it's no wonder AQuickDelivery surpasses growth goals year over year.

Messenger Courier World: You have a successful company, but why the courier industry? It would appear you could be successful in other industries.

Mark McCurry: I entered the courier industry by complete chance and a large streak of luck. During the mid-90s I was a business broker and was approached by a client to find courier companies. While engaged in the transactions, I became enamored by the fact that you could have an office in one location and have a customer 1 mile, 10 miles or the next state away. Location was not a limitation as it is in so many other small businesses. I also liked the residual nature of the revenue and the fact that sales consisted of small incremental amounts. I was used to making a living on a few large transactions a year, so 100 transactions a day seemed like a much more guaranteed payday.

I started to do more research about the industry and during that time a former client, who had purchased a courier business, was interested in selling. He had recently purchased the business as a good way to spend his retirement without realizing the amount of work involved with managing and growing a successful courier company. I offered the client the full purchase price he had paid for it six months prior, along with his requirement to owner finance it and include money to float accounts receivables for the first few months. To my complete surprise, he accepted. That evening, I drove over to my best friend and

former college roommate's house, Lon Fancher, and said, "We just bought a business!" The next day he gave notice at his company and joined me one month later.

MCW: What changes have you seen in this business over the last few years?

MM: The Internet has been both a positive and a negative change in our business over the last few years. Due to the availability of low-cost Internet connectivity, electronic signatures and email, the revenue associated with transporting information has been greatly reduced. However, the Internet has also allowed companies to compete against larger competitors by having a strong online presence. In addition, the Internet allows us to reach more potential customers, lower the cost of sales and close many accounts without the need for a salesperson's time. It has also increased our technological abilities such as ordering, tracking and online PODs, which helps us to immediately communicate with our customers without the administrative burdens of the "Where is my package?" phone calls.

Another change in the industry is in the relative value of courier services. Our settlement to our drivers has not kept pace with their increased vehicle purchase costs, maintenance costs, fuel, and living expenses. The courier profession is not as lucrative as it could have been years ago due to those rising costs.

Finally, communication costs have dropped significantly. Ten years ago, radios and one-way pagers were a 4-5% cost of business, but now we have GPS, two-way messaging, unlimited data and unlimited "talk time" for less than a 2% cost of business.

MCW: If you could go back in time, what would you do different?

MM: Since our niche in the beginning was on-demand, we focused too much unproductive energy, time and effort into "Delivery Perfection." We would get worried if we delivered one package one minute late. The office staff, including myself, would go out and do deliveries if we thought there was any chance that package would be late. I think that was a great foundation to start from, but as the company matured we managed to form a more balanced viewpoint. On-time delivery still is our number one priority and measuring matrix, but it is not our only consideration. By focusing on customer service, strong delivery margins, proper communication regarding delivery failures and consistent efforts of on-time delivery, we have been able to maintain future revenue growth and profitability.

Secondly, in our first few years, AQuickDelivery was experiencing 100% yearly growth and accounts receivable was becoming a huge problem. I financed the business almost entirely on my own personal credit cards, which at one point reached \$125,000. In an effort to get the AR under control, I hired a factoring company. That was an expensive mistake, in both excessive interest expense and a loss of control. We got out of the situation by getting an SBA loan. Even though the SBA process is cumbersome and time-consuming, the SBA loan is a much cheaper and easier way for small starting businesses to secure funding.

MCW: What have been your investments in technology? This seems to be a major part of your business strategy.

MM: One tenet that has made AQuickDelivery successful is that we have invested in the latest technology. On the courier side, we have a great partnership with CXT Software. The purchase of their courier software has allowed us to stay on the forefront of technology.



CXT Software has been great in providing yearly updates that have kept the service we offer to our customers current and on the cutting edge.

For drivers, we use 2-way messaging to get orders to the drivers and receive delivery updates from them. Recently, we deployed an interactive GPS solution for all AQuickDelivery drivers.

For office productivity we replace our computers every three years and provide double monitors to more than half our office staff. We are extremely technically focused and use technology to leverage productivity and offer better service to our customers and drivers.

For marketing and customer retention, AQuickDelivery, www.aquickdelivery.com, has invested heavily in the Internet and Internet marketing. Our customers can place orders online track orders and participate in a customer loyalty rewards program. Recently, we successfully launched www.a1express.com, a nationwide same day courier order system.

MCW: What factors have been most important in your success?

MM: One key component to our success is a commitment to a full staff on Fridays. In our fast pace business I would estimate that we have gained close to 50% of our new clients on Fridays. When other courier companies fail or cannot make pickups due to short staffing, we are able to make the delivery. Customers remember that and value that service level.

AQuickDelivery management has focused on treating drivers and employees with respect and trust. For the last five years we have hosted a monthly Driver Pizza Party to show appreciation to our drivers. During the meeting our Dispatch department conveys company news and safety and we have prizes for the drivers based on their previous



month deliveries. We also strive to have a productive office environment and systems in place that allow us to offer above-industry pay and benefits to our employees. By providing a great place to work, we have enjoyed low employee turnover, which has provided the personnel continuity that customers love.

MCW: What are you most proud of?

MM: I am most proud that AQuickDelivery has been successful enough to provide a great work environment and decent living for so many employees and drivers.

It is also a joy to work with two of my closest friends in a business venture together. Lon Fancher and Scott Moller are two great people, and looking back to my time in college, I would have never thought I would be afforded such a great opportunity.

I also love milestones, and our team recently achieved the milestone of our first \$35,000 day.

MCW: What niche in the transportation business do you specialize in, and what is it that you believe you do better than others?

MM: AQuickDelivery specializes almost entirely in the on-demand business. In addition, most of our route work consists of tight time parameters. AQuickDelivery generates more than half the revenue from deliveries that need to be done in less than one hour. With so many of our

competitors focusing on routes and distribution, I feel that this focus has allowed us to further develop this niche. Our tag line in Atlanta is: Metro Atlanta Deliveries in 1 Hour, Envelopes to Pallets.

MCW: What piece of advice would you give someone just starting out in this business?

MM: One thing that has allowed us to grow and maintain high quality has been to always hire ahead of demand. When you only need 1¼ CSRs — hire a second. Doing so will allow you to offer superior customer service. Customers don't like to wait on hold for minutes to give an order that only takes 15 seconds.

Another piece of advice is to hire an office assistant as soon as you can afford to do so. Have them perform the tasks of bank deposits, communication equipment management, delivering rate packages, shopping trips, assisting stranded drivers, etc. Having an assistant helps the owner to focus on the tasks and projects that produce future revenue and value.

MCW: What do you do to attract and retain drivers?

MM: At AQuickDelivery, we treat all drivers with respect and trust. I ingrain in my dispatchers to treat drivers fairly and equitably. Secondly, a sale is never made with out asking the question, "Is this fair compensation for our drivers?"



MCW: What has been your most memorable delivery?

MM: After 9/11, one of our Atlanta customers had payroll for their plants in the Northeast, but all of the planes were grounded. The payroll had to be delivered to three locations in New York, two in Vermont, one in New Hampshire and Maine. We were extremely busy that week and did not have drivers to spare. So our sales department made up of a two-man team delivered all the paychecks in their own car within 36 hours. Because of their efforts, more than 14,500 employees got their paycheck on time. I am proud of this effort and the effort our team puts in everyday.

MCW: If you stopped doing what you're doing now, what would like to do instead?

MM: When I start my next business, I would like it to have no AR. It would focus more on an immediate purchase and a business-to-consumer market. By operating it completely online, I will cut down on the overhead and additional costs associated with many small businesses. I would also look for a business that would afford higher sales per employee. **MCW**



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