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Dec. 11, 2012

Zipline Logistics Wins Profits with ‘Golden Rule’ Customer Service

Company builds relationships and profits with carriers as well as customers

Looking at each delivery as the beginning of a long-term relationship has transported Zipline Logistics into the realm of companies that not only meet, but exceed expectations.

It’s also catapulted the company into one of Columbus, Ohio’s top 50 fastest-growing companies.

When twenty-something friends J.J. Rodeheffer, Andrew Lynch, and Edward Williams started the company in 2007, they knew from five years of experience with a national logistics company just how they wanted—and didn’t want— to do business.

They wanted a company that is extremely driven to get positive results for customers-- while living out their values in every decision they make. They wanted a

company that would do what it takes to make things right when there was a problem, where truck drivers smiled as they made a delivery.

They got what they wanted, and their dedication to the Golden Rule is paying off. After only four years in business, Zipline has 4,700 trucker contracts. None have left them—ever. In a recent customer and carrier survey, 98 percent of customers said their relationship with Zipline was based on honesty, integrity and loyalty; 94 percent felt Zipline interacted with them in a friendly, straightforward manner; and 94 percent said Zipline carriers represented them in a positive manner. What's more, 88 percent of truckers polled said they'd rather take a Zipline load than from any other carrier.

That, said Rodeheffer, is the Zipline recipe for success. Exceed expectations every time.

In just a few short years, Zipline has built partnerships with large transportation companies that had 20-year relationship with other logistics companies. But the biggest sign of success? While the industry has declined during the recession, Zipline has experienced double-digit growth as customers responded to their different way of doing business. Revenues have nearly doubled each of the years the company has been in business. Estimated 2011 revenues alone are expected to jump to from \$4.4 million in 2010 to \$7.7 million.

Logistics is a very low bar-to-entry business, said Rodeheffer. The market was crowded when he and his partners started out, and it wasn't an underserved niche. "But we felt it was underserved in the right way to do business," he said. "We wanted to utilize our skills and knowledge in logistics, but do the right thing every time."

Rodeheffer said too many logistics companies try too hard to squeeze margins. Zipline believes in paying carriers well-- and paying them quickly-- so they are happy to haul loads for the company. “We don’t want to beat up people to get the cheapest rate possible,” he said. “We’re small, so we don’t have the ability to drive their rates down, anyway. But respect goes a long way, and carriers appreciate that. They reward us by doing the best they can for us—we get a smiling driver when he shows up at a customer’s door.”

Zipline’s carriers and customers range from small, independent carriers and the largest in the nation.

Billy Fannin of Billy Fannin Trucking in Vanceburg, Kentucky runs short hauls and is a Zipline carrier. He’s been a trucker since 1986, has owned his own truck since 1998, and has been an independent carrier since April of 2010.

“Zipline is the best company I’ve ever hauled freight with,” said Fannin. “Without a doubt they are my favorite— they are the nicest people, and they are straightforward with you. They pay fast, we work together like partners, and they provide great customer service.

“If three people call me at the same time, I take the Zipline job. When they call, I drop what I’m doing to take care of them.”

Bill Miller is customer service relations manager for Celadon Trucking Services, one of North America’s largest truckload carriers with annual revenue exceeding \$550 million. Headquartered in Indianapolis, Celadon employs approximately 4,000 employees and operates roughly 3,300 tractors and 10,000 trailers, according to its

website. It operates in 48 states, and specializes in importing and exporting out of Mexico and Canada.

“Zipline is professional, knowledgeable about the industry, easy to work with and understands the problems involved with carriers,” said Miller. “They are outstanding when it comes to ethics. I’ve been working with them ever since they’ve been in business; we were probably one of the first carriers to work with them.”

Rodeheffer said communication is one key area where Zipline excels. In logistics, there are many ways to delay a shipment—bad weather, road closures, truck breakdowns or flat tires. Zipline makes it a point to report both the positives and negatives to customers.

“When problems arise, we not only try to head them off, but communicate with the customer right away,” he said. “We prove we are a part of their team through vendor phone calls, emails, and status updates on orders. I think they appreciate us getting information to them right away. I think a lot of people in service industries hide problems and only promote their successes. We’re good at uncovering problems and promoting what we do well.”

A company motto is that there is no such thing as a transaction. Every delivery involves a shipper and a receiver—and an opportunity to build two trusting relationships.

In response to its growth, Rodeheffer said Zipline has significantly upgraded its software system to add to its ability to increase daily business this year. The firm has doubled its office space, and is hiring two more employees, bringing employee totals to 11. “We’re looking to push the envelope on sales and the operations side this year,” said Rodeheffer.

Rodeheffer said Zipline sees opportunities for today, tomorrow and down the road. “We’re not just sales guys or dispatchers handling freight,” he said. “We’re a team that cares about people. We’re looking for people looking for service, who respect that we work with the highest levels of integrity. And those are the people we are partnering with.”

Zipline Logistics, LLC was named one of Columbus, Ohio’s top 50 fastest-growing companies in 2010 by *Business First*. The third-party logistics company handles truck and rail shipment delivery across 48 states and Canada. For information, go to www.ziplinelogistics.com or call (888) 469-4754.

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