

Midlands Business Journal

MARCH 23, 2012

THE WEEKLY BUSINESS PAPER OF GREATER OMAHA, LINCOLN AND COUNCIL BLUFFS

VOL. 38 NO. 12

Claritus expands office space as it gains traction in mail equipment, supplies area

by Michelle Leach

Claritus has quadrupled the size of its Sioux Falls office in a new building, and is actively exploring new IT support hires to meet demand in the growing software side of the business, according to President David Herbert.

The Lincoln-based business, which primarily offers mail equipment and supplies, as well as identification or access products, may not be the most inexpensive option out there, according to Herbert, but he indicated it hasn't been in a tough position of laying off employees (on the contrary, they've been hiring).

"Most people are looking for value," he said. "That doesn't always mean the cheapest price. We've been very well-positioned to offer people a better value."

On the "people" side, Herbert said Claritus has strong hardware technicians, but is also exploring hiring more professionals with software and IT support expertise to meet growing demand on the software side.

"I'd rather have somebody with fresh ideas," Herbert said, when asked about whether prior industry expertise is a plus. "I'm looking for networking capabilities, and also project management." Specifically, in a nod to an area of promise, Herbert is looking for expertise with integrating software products into, for example, existing ERM or banking systems.

The mail industry has some very low-tech roots (think Pony Express); however, such adaptation marks the future of the industry. Herbert spoke to a recent meeting he attended with a manufacturer Claritus represents, as well as U.S. Postal Service



President David Herbert ... Software solutions on mail side, identification systems call for expanded offices, new hires, personnel.

"We're planning for what's next as mail volume declines," he said.

The big question mark is, as "traditional" mail sloughs off, what is taking its place? It's not as simple as answering "email," according to Herbert.

He relays the rush to send all invoices through email, but then accounts receivable goes haywire, as emails may not get to the intended recipient — for instance, they can end up in the spam folder.

Herbert stressed this has been an issue the industry has been addressing through technology for at least the past five years, with Claritus offering software so smart that, if an important document does end up in spam, they will be notified it didn't reach the intended recipient and a hard copy will be sent out to the intended immediately.

And, just as professionals in-the-know once said fax machines

would be the end of mail as we once knew it, Herbert said mail is not going away anytime soon. If anything, he indicated a retooled USPS is needed, but not the demise of the postal service.

"No other organization delivers to every single house in the U.S. except the post office," he said, adding, the quandary instead is: "Basically, how do you integrate email into your normal mail stream? That's where we're kind of on the leading-edge in offering that to our customers."

He noted the adoption rate for harnessing such technology has been dependent on business type so far, with banks being the first adopters as there has been a significant push for offerings like e-statements.

As much as Herbert spoke to more hires on the software side related to such solutions, he noted the growth that required its Sioux Falls office to move from 4,000 to 16,000 square feet was necessitated by its identification products.

Claritus sells the equipment and related supplies needed to make those photo ID's one flashes in front of the door to gain access

to an office, according to Herbert. "We hired three or four people to push that, and one vertical market is we started providing equipment to emergency managers," he said.

Claritus played a part in flood-fighting efforts in South Dakota this past summer by providing mobile identification kits.

Herbert suggests looking at the kits like, instead of tracking inventory, they're tracking people — the kits help those in charge of managing the disaster to track individuals who go into and out of the disaster site.

Another example of its community commitment comes courtesy of its holiday party, whereby each employee was asked to write down on a sheet of paper one organization or cause close to his or her heart.

"We donated \$100 in each employee's name," Herbert said, to the cause he or she identified on that piece of paper.

Herbert said it was a bigger hit than any food or other party fare.

"When we've been as successful as we have been, it's our responsibility to give back to the communities we're in," he said.

In addition to its Lincoln headquarters, Claritus also has an Omaha office and a small leased space in the Sioux City area of Dakota Dunes, S.D.

Herbert indicated if the company was to grow brick and mortar-wise it wouldn't be additions to existing spaces — it would be a new market entirely.

"We have no expansion plans right now, but we're always looking for opportunities in the Midwest," he said.

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