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Tools & Techniques for Staffing & Recruiting

case study

By Julie McCoy



The Jacobson Group

It's a story of two brothers who went from working for the staffing company their dad started to actually running it. Greg and Rick Jacobson assumed the reins at The Jacobson Group in 2001, when their father, David Jacobson, retired. And they've filled his shoes ever since.

Serving the Insurance, Healthcare and Financial Service Industries

Founded in 1971, The Jacobson Group

provides a variety of professional and human capital solutions to the insurance, healthcare and financial service industries. The company has three different divisions: Jacobson Associates, Jacobson Executive Search and Jacobson Solutions.

Jacobson Associates is the company's professional recruiting division and places people in managerial and technical positions. Jacobson Executive Search focuses on placing people in CEO, vice president and board-level positions. And Jacobson

The Jacobson Group

Solutions, referred to as the company's "flexible delivery arm" has three service lines: Jacobson Solutions - Subject Matter Experts, which provides exec-level talent for consulting opportunities; Jacobson Solutions - Healthcare Resources, which provides on-site support services to health plans to help them overcome their challenges; and Jacobson Solutions - Local Talent, which places people in technical positions.

Companywide, The Jacobson Group placed 950 people last year. Of those, 750 were placed in temporary positions, and 200 were placed in permanent positions. "We only deal with really experienced people within the industry," comments Greg.

The Jacobson Group, which generated \$33.5 million in 2007, expects to bring in \$43 million this year. The company has offices in Chicago, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Charlotte NC, Indianapolis, Cleveland OH, Dallas, Austin, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver and St. Louis.

The Jacobson Group has never made any acquisitions; all of its growth has been organic, according to Rick.

In 2007, The Jacobson Group ranked 34th on Staffing Industry Analysts' list of fastest-growing firms. It was the first time the company had made the cut.

To what do the Jacobson brothers attribute their company's success? The people who work for it. "We bring great people into this organization, and we keep great people," says Rick. "We have a fantastic executive management team made up of

eight people." Adds Greg, "These people are very accomplished, very talented, very committed to the organization because they believe in what we're doing."

It helps that most people on staff and the majority of the management team have experience themselves in the three industries The Jacobson Group serves, points out Greg. Management also spends a lot of time mentoring staff. "That grassroots approach to mentoring has worked out very well for us," explains Greg.

Happy Candidates

The Jacobson Group has placed Teletha Johnson of Memphis TN at a variety of major insurance companies, including Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Cigna, WellPoint and Tufts Healthcare in Boston. "They are a strong company and they're growing," she says. "I feel like I'm part of their growing company. They appreciate the work I do. I'm very honored to be working for them. They pay me well. They treat me well. I'm going places and doing things. I have been able to expand my knowledge of the insurance industry and meet a lot of nice people along the way." Johnson's assignments take her all over the United States, and she enjoys the traveling, she says.

Donna Pearlman, owner and sole proprietor of reinsurance company DP Consulting Co., subcontracts through The Jacobson Group. "They're constantly looking for my next assignment. They have a huge database (with insurance and reinsurance companies). All I have to do is

go in and do the job. It frees me up to do more billable work instead of spending my time on nonbillable activities (such as marketing, accounting, travel arranging, networking and going to meetings).

Continues Pearlman, "They take care of it all for me. They sift through all of the opportunities and only present me with the best ones. I have just enjoyed the experience of working with them so much. They have a much bigger roster than I could ever reach on my own. They've got the connections. They know the people. They're very responsive. They're very reputable. They've been in my industry forever."

The Jacobson Group placed David Neff at The Main Street America Group, where he helped prepare an internal users manual for the company's new business owners program that is being offered to independent agents. He's also helped with insurance declaration pages, schedules and forms, and anything else assigned.

"They do a good job of trying to match a subject matter expert with the client needs," explains Neff, who has recommended The Jacobson Group to friends who also are in the business. "They don't waste anyone's time, neither the client nor the individual who is seeking work. ... It's been a good situation. I'm pleased with the Jacobson people."

Satisfied Clients, Too

And it's not just The Jacobson Group's temporary workers who like the company; its clients do, too. Henry Pippins, VP of com-

The two brothers – who live about a mile away from each other – say they get along very well and are able to separate the business relationship from the family relationship.

mercial lines operations for The Main Street America Group, says his company is pleased with the temporary underwriters and product consultants it has gotten through The Jacobson Group.

“Everything that was on their resume measured with the skill level that the person had,” comments Pippins. “What they are on paper, they are in actuality, and more. Everything they (The Jacobson Group) promised, they delivered on. From an underwriting and insurance product perspective, they’re in the top echelon. With Jacobson, we’ve gotten everything we’ve expected, and then some.”

Pippins says he’s impressed with the speed in which The Jacobson Group has been able to find people. He wants someone with a lot of experience, and The Jacobson Group is able to get that for him. “They know their craft and they know how to identify the talent this specific industry needs.”

Gallagher Basset in Plano TX has worked with The Jacobson Group at least a couple of years, according to Jim Taylor, branch manager. “Whenever we need someone, we need someone now,” he explains. “Julie Garza is my contact person with Jacobson, and she’s been really responsive. They’ve been able to meet any kinds of demand I’ve been able to place forth. They’ve been able to get us quality employees.”

The workers fill the adjustor position that is currently open and handle all of the claims assigned to that desk, explains Taylor. Several of the workers have done such a good job that Gallagher Basset has hired them full-time.

Strong Community Involvement

The Jacobson Group encourages its staff to donate to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and matches what staff contributes to the organization. The company also supports a group called Midnight Ministry, which helps homeless people in the Chicago area. Additionally, The Jacobson Group’s senior VP, Susan Henry, is president of the Illinois Staffing Association.

Playing Their Different Strengths

Both Greg and Rick have different responsibilities and bring different strengths to The Jacobson Group. Greg handles sales and marketing. He spends a lot of time defining a marketing strategy for the organization, visiting potential clients and developing relationships. Meanwhile, Rick handles accounting, human resources and information technology.

The two brothers – who live about a mile away from each other – say they get along very well and are able to separate the business relationship from the family relationship. Neither Greg nor Rick had been in the staffing industry

prior to joining the company. Greg spent a year at MCI, and Rick was at Anderson Consulting, now Accenture.

About the Brothers

Greg has a degree in violin performance from Illinois State University. His wife, Betsy, plays the cello, while their daughters Emily, 11, and Lauren, 9, play the violin and cello, respectively.

Rick studied mechanical engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He and his wife, Cathy, have three children: Max, 12; Molly, 5; and Abby, 4.

Greg is an avid skier while Rick enjoys running. Both brothers are baseball fans. Greg likes the Chicago Cubs while Rick favors the White Sox. Yet, despite that the fact that they root for different teams, they both agree that they hit a home run with The Jacobson Group. **SI**

Company: The Jacobson Group

Headquarters: Chicago IL

Founded: 1971

Industries Served: insurance, healthcare and financial

Revenue: \$33.5 million in 2007

Web site: www.jacobsononline.com