



Tech

SUCCESS

By Jackie Kelvington

HOW TWO OF METRO ORLANDO'S LARGEST PRIVATELY-HELD TECH FIRMS ARE STAYING IN GROWTH MODE.



While discussions about business growth remain difficult for many companies these days, two of our region's largest privately-held tech firms have growth plans top-of-mind.



Jim Jardon, JHT Inc.

Twenty-year-old tech company that provides computer-based training, technical data management, environmental and marine sciences, and construction services for both government and commercial industries.



Marty Rubin, Smart City Holdings

National leader in advanced telecommunications and entertainment services, providing residential, business and hospitality connections for voice, data and video services.

Jim Jardon and Marty Rubin have several things in common. Both lead Orlando-based tech companies. Both companies are listed among the 'Golden 100' in *Orlando Business Journal's* 2010 Book of Lists. And both are willing to share the secrets of success, lessons learned, management tips, and marketing tactics that are helping them defy the odds and remain focused on growth despite a tough economy.

Texture: What is the real secret of your success?

Mr Marty Rubin: In 1999, we asked our client base, which was rather small at the time, which company did



they admire most? To our surprise, the top answer was not a technology company, it was the Ritz-Carlton. This insight challenged us to think of ourselves as a hospitality company first and a technology company second. We contacted the Ritz-Carlton and our staff underwent Ritz-Carlton training programs. Over the past ten years, every team member in every one of our offices spends ten minutes each day reviewing one of the Ritz-Carlton principles of customer service. I think that real success is often measured by your customers and that the lens they view your success through may be quite interesting.

T What changes did you make in 2008 and 2009 that proved to be most valuable or profitable for the company?

jj Jim Jardon: The transition to a more economical, efficient and high quality office space at the end of our previous lease, coupled with the difficult decision to make labor adjustments, managed to sustain our corporate viability.

T What advice would you give to other entrepreneurs — those trying to start something, just starting out, or those who have a few years' experience under their belts?

mr Marty Rubin: The perception that entrepreneurs are risk takers is incorrect. We are risk mitigators. The goal of an entrepreneur should be to understand all of the risks and develop creative ways to reduce your exposures. That does not mean we should necessarily be conservative, but rather we should consciously strive to get the best return while lessening the risks.

T Tell us about your management strategies. What works, who is a role model for you when it comes to leadership style, and what (if any) changes have you made?

jj Jim Jardon: I have always believed, due to my military training, the best mantra is: lead, follow or get out of the way. I have a very simple way of managing individuals: I delegate responsibility and authority and hold them accountable for their work. My goal is to avoid micromanagement.

The most recent change in leadership was the appointment of Ray

Malatino as president of the company. This decision put someone highly qualified in place and allowed more time for my participation in and contributions to community organizations.

T What about your sales and marketing ... what new and successful tactics are you using?

jj Jim Jardon: Our sales and marketing efforts have become more succinct over time. We now have a structured team in place to better approach our government markets and develop our commercial interests. Over the course of a month beginning in January of this year, our marketing representative created and implemented a social networking plan establishing a presence for JHT on both Twitter and LinkedIn.

T What do you think are Metro Orlando's greatest assets for tech firms like yours?

mr Marty Rubin: The business community in Metro Orlando is very open to newcomers. We moved to Orlando in 2001 and it feels like we have been a part of the community for much longer. That is important to us. The ability to quickly network with established business leaders in this community has played a significant role in our ability to introduce new services, hire talent and to solve problems.

T What are your plans for 2010?

jj Jim Jardon: Our plan is to sustain our efforts to recover from a tough economic period. My goal is to see 10 percent growth in revenue and personnel and to continue to expand our presence in the private sector. **x**