

INJURY: Business took longer to recover from Daniel's accident than she did

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far and I wasn't about to let the staff down." When she was released from the hospital, she couldn't go up or down steps or drive a car. Two weeks later, she decided to get out of bed and go down the steps.

"People said I couldn't, but I faced my fear," Daniel said.

Four months later, she was back working, but the business' recovery took much longer than her own. She lost customers, including her oldest and biggest client.

"They didn't think I'd be capable of running the business," she said. "My confidence went way down for a while, but I never thought of giving up, and in the end, my anger and determination to succeed made me fight harder."

Daniel said it took about five years for the company to return to where it was at the time of the accident. Since then, it has grown steadily. Revenue has increased by more than 30 percent in each of the last three years, reaching nearly \$2 million in 2005, she said.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

MTC started in a garage with a three-person staff and now employs eight people in its office on the north side of Columbus. The company uses scanning equipment to convert paper documents and microfilm into electronic images that can be viewed with a client's own software or online. It also sells document management equipment.

Its customers include the Ohio Board of Nursing, Ohio State University, Mattison & Co., NetJets and Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Columbus.

"Because we're a small company, we give personal service and feel we're better able to listen to our clients' needs than if we were a larger organization," she said.

Porter Wright Morris & Arthur, the city's second largest law firm with 190 attorneys in Columbus, is one of those customers.

"We've used Teresa for several years and she and her business are fantastic," said Tom Richardson, records manager for the firm.



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Michael Stockinger is one of eight employees who work at Columbus-based MTC Document Management.

"We feel her company is an extension of the firm, and she's gone overboard many times to help us get everything our attorneys need to assist clients. She's come here personally many times on nights or weekends to fulfill urgent requests and saved us from suffocating in paper records and intake forms."

Richardson said MTC frequently will take about 75 legal-size boxes full of documents and record them on three or four CDs, resulting in substantial savings of storage space.

"MTC has handled our records for between eight and 10 years and grown with us every step of the way from microfilm and microfiche to scanning, which is so much more efficient," said Diane Larsuel, claims manager for the fringe benefit program of the Columbus-based Ohio Association of Operating Engineers. Its members operate heavy

equipment used in construction and road building.

"Much of our work involves health-care claims, an industry that's always changing, and MTC has been outstanding in the way the company listens and offers ideas to help us," she said.

GETTING STARTED

Daniel began the business as a microfilm service bureau in 1988 after about three years working with other companies.

"I didn't have any problems at the places I worked, but always had a desire to go into business on my own because I have a sense of operations that's been instinctive in me from the beginning," she said. "I always ... thought there was a better way to handle documents than having boxes full of paper."

She began MTC with \$10,000 she had

saved and a \$20,000 Small Business Administration loan, which was paid back in five years.

Daniel said the best piece of business advice she has received came from H.K. Bain, president of Digitech Systems Inc.

"He said that in terms of selling, I should just be myself. As soon as I started doing that, I realized he was right on the button," she said. "I'd tell the same thing to any other entrepreneur. I'd also say that if you're going to go into business understand finances. This isn't something you have to go to school to do, but it's a necessity to avoid all sorts of possible problems."

Since her injury, Daniel has employed several other people who have had brain injuries and is committed to providing others the opportunity to work.

One of those employees is Janiece Jennings, a scan operator, who says the work is an important part of her recovery.

"In my case, I didn't suffer trauma instantly," Jennings said. "I knew for years that I had a problem, but didn't know what it was until I started working with counselors who diagnosed it. Once I knew what my condition was, it changed my life because I could get the help I needed. My job here is wonderful because of how it's helped me get back into the flow of everyday living."

About a year ago, Daniel learned about the Brain Injury Association of Ohio, which provides information, counseling and resources to people who have had brain trauma and their families and friends.

She has become active with the organization since then and is a sponsor of its annual conference, scheduled Sept. 28 and 29 at the Columbus Airport Marriott. Daniel will be among those who will be speaking about their experiences.

"I'm making plans for growth in the business over the next few years, but I don't want to get into specifics yet," Daniel said.

"Whatever I do, I know I'll be continuing to try to help people with brain injuries as much as I can, whether it's through hiring them or working with the brain injury association."

In the era of new media, know your customer and know your brand

It's difficult to pick up a magazine or newspaper without reading about the growing importance of new media for businesses.

So how do you know if you should be using new media to promote your company's product or service? The answer is: Know your customer, know your brand and understand the pros and cons new media can offer.

WHAT IS IT?

It is important to first understand what is considered new media. Generally speaking, new media are those communication mediums that can affect a product or service through the Web, such as blogs, Really Simple Syndication feeds, chat rooms, content seeding, pod casting, third screens and viral marketing campaigns.

While these channels offer different avenues for reaching out to customers and stakeholders, the benefits they provide can be similar to traditional media. A Web site becomes the equivalent of a brochure by offering educational material, background information, company profiles and services. Online advertisements mimic their more traditional print partners by working to build brand identity and awareness.



INSIGHT

KELLY GRATZ

InSight features advice on small-business issues from different local perspectives.

Chat rooms, blogs and discussion groups help create third-party credibility for brands in much the same way that public relations does using offline marketing tactics. These alternatives reach consumers where they are – online or the cell phone.

The advantage that new media provides over the traditional channels is the opportunity to interact with the customer more directly and gain immediate feedback. For example, a company may use blogs, chat rooms and discussion groups to gather feedback from customers about what they like or dislike about a brand and use that information to improve its product.

Also, if the company can find an advocate for its product or service and encourage that advocate to communicate

feelings in a blog, RSS feed or chat room, it can be shared with friends online and spread via word of mouth, which builds additional credibility for the brand.

At the same time, companies must be prepared for negative feedback and criticism since messages online cannot be controlled.

THE FINANCIAL PART

Consumers are influenced by three screens – televisions, computers and handheld items such as personal digital assistants, cell phones and MP3 players. Those devices are seen as the third screen.

They can be a convenient, cost-effective way to deliver information to a user group who may be crunched for time or in transit. While a 60-second, prime-time television commercial might be an ideal medium if your target audience is quite broad, third-screen media give businesses the flexibility to reach more segmented audiences with on-demand information they can view on their own schedules. Third screens can also be used to extend the impact of traditional marketing communications tactics beyond the typical limits of time and space. For instance, a speech giv-

en by a company officer at a trade conference could be distributed as a podcast.

If considering new media as a marketing tool, keep in mind these things:

- Your customers. How do they like to be communicated with? What are the demographics and how do they get their information?
- Your brand. What is the strategic goal behind your product or service? Does using new media reinforce or confuse the brand message? What features set you apart from the competitors and how can new media help?
- What is the call to action for your customer? Does the message prompt your customer to take this action?
- Does your company have in-house expertise to create new media tools and place them in the right channel? Do you have the resources to manage these tools?

If you're still unsure, do a small-scale trial targeting a small audience segment. This allows you to gauge the effectiveness of the tool before rolling it out to your entire customer base.

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