

# Service Team Success

## Dealerships share how they hire, train & motivate techs

by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

Are you fully satisfied with how your dealership hires, trains and motivates service techs? If not, the following BTA member dealership profiles provide a brief look at some of their methods in these areas. Perhaps the comments they share will provide you with the guidance you are seeking.

### Adams Remco Inc.

Rex Carlile had been a service technician at Remington Rand, later purchased the South Bend, Indiana, office of the company and, ultimately, acquired Adams Typewriters, another Remington Rand office. The result was Adams Remco Inc. (ARI), established in 1977. Today, the dealership has approximately 120 employees — including around 40 service personnel — across five locations in Indiana, three in Michigan and two in Florida. The dealership's imaging products lineup: Ricoh, Toshiba, Brother, HP, Lexmark and KIP.

Mark Marshall serves as service manager at ARI. Each branch location also has a service team leader. The shared philosophy in hiring, retaining and motivating service department personnel has served the company well, he says. "It's about 'team,'" he says. "That's the driving factor at Adams Remco and the reason we keep people here for 40 years; we value 'team.'"

New hires joining the service team are most often found via Indeed, Marshall says; ARI has hired several new techs in the past year. New techs do not necessarily come from within the industry, he says. "I would hire the right experienced person, but our focus is primarily on hiring someone who has good, solid customer skills and some mechanical aptitude," Marshall says. "We can teach them anything else."

Where does Marshall find new hires? "I try to find people who are accustomed to going from one customer account to another," he says. "That could be somebody installing cable or doing appliance delivery. I even had a fire extinguisher service tech come in for an interview the other day."

Marshall offers additional insight into the type of person



he seeks to hire. "We want people who have high-quality expectations of themselves, rather than people driven by money and outside things," he says. "We want people we can see are going to be good employees, able to follow directions and work on their own; we empower that and feed that. That's been our style for the 40 years I've been at the company."

Part of what feeds ARI's style is the way it treats its employees, Marshall says. "I never missed any of my kids' activities and programs in school; the company always worked with me so that I could attend," he says. "My vision with all of our service team members is that they be good parents and spouses. If they can make their families happy, then they are happy. Our culture here isn't negative; I don't like drama. We don't need any of that. We just take care of our people so they can be the best they can be."

In terms of the hiring process, Marshall conducts the first screening interview and a service team leader conducts the second, more in-depth interview. Candidates also take a Wonderlic assessment test to gauge their decision-making abilities. "Having given that test many times, I know where the score needs to come back," he says. "A poor score shows me there is going to be a problem down the road."

Once hired, new techs attend product training with ARI's manufacturer-certified trainer and are "under heavy mentoring for 90 days," Marshall says. "That helps them get to know the people they are going to be working with and understand that focus on 'team.' They will learn that everybody 'has their back' — that they've got all the rest of the team, company-wide, there for them. They learn, for example, that they can be in Indiana and call a guy in Michigan or Florida and ask for advice about a problem with a machine."

That team focus is grown, in part, through monthly company-wide service meetings and weekly local team meetings, Marshall says, noting that there is also a fair amount of team building through such activities as baseball game outings. "It's all about building them up so that

everybody understands we all need each other.”

### Eakes Office Solutions

With nearly 300 employees working from 14 locations across the state of Nebraska, it comes as no surprise that Eakes Office Solutions, a Sharp and Ricoh dealership headquartered in Grand Island, has 54 employees on the service team. That includes management, office

equipment field techs (37 of them), dedicated setup techs, installation techs, a remote support desk tech, a used parts program tech, and service personnel working in the dealership’s technology services and janitorial divisions.

How does Eakes find its service personnel? “We use online job boards like Indeed to start the process,” says Kevin Fries, director of human resources. “If we don’t get any hits, then we start reaching out to recruiters; we’ve identified a couple that really have a good pulse on our industry. We also spend time going to job fairs at technical colleges.”

In addition, says Mike Nierman, general manager of corporate service, Eakes provides referral bonuses to its employees. “With nearly 300 employees, that’s a lot of people who know a lot of people,” he says. “That’s been an amazing resource for us.”

Even with its many hiring successes, Fries acknowledges that attracting new techs into the workforce can be difficult. “Over the past three or four years, we have started to see that become a challenge,” he says. “The new generation is different. Some want to be IT ‘techy’ people and a lot of them don’t want to have — or don’t have — mechanical break/fix ability. So, in hiring, we may find some have just one skill that we are seeking; we have to teach them the rest. It’s definitely been a challenge over the last few years.”

Nierman is quick to express appreciation for the efforts Fries has made to make jobs at Eakes more appealing to all generations of workers. “On the HR side, Kevin has been very proactive in keeping our benefits up to date,” he says. “For example, we now offer pet insurance, flex hours and charity hours, where you can work up to four hours a month for a local charity and get paid for it. These are great benefits.”

In terms of the hiring process for techs, once they are screened by Eakes’ staff recruiter, service management conducts two interviews, Nierman says. “We then conduct a mechanical aptitude test and do a DiSC analysis,” he says. “We also have a test called SOLVE, which is more customized, where we can define what we’re looking for in a service tech. It analyzes personalities based on exactly what we are seeking.”

“We want people who have high-quality expectations of themselves, rather than people driven by money and outside things. We want people we can see are going to be good employees ... ”



— Mark Marshall  
Adams Remco Inc.

Once hired, the onboarding process for techs is multifaceted, Nierman says. “We go over policies and procedures in the first couple of days,” he says. “After that, a new tech spends about half of each day doing online training provided by manufacturers and the other half of each day riding along with a senior tech. Often, after a couple of weeks, the tech will switch to riding with another

senior tech, who may have a slightly different way of working. Our goal here is to give the new techs resources they can call on once they are in the field.”

Noting that one member of the service team is a manufacturer-certified on-site trainer, Nierman emphasizes that service training is ongoing for Eakes’ techs. “Our goal — and we’re pretty successful at it — is to always have some training in front of every single service tech,” he says. “If you’re not continuing to learn in the service industry, then you’re going backwards.”

While Eakes’ techs are assigned individual geographic territories, there is a strong team focus within the service department, Nierman says. “We have made a part of our bonus program a team bonus for techs based on things like parts expense and response times,” he says. “So, for example, if one tech is busy, the team can keep that response time down by having another step in to help.”

Finally, Nierman says, the service team members meet often. “We have in-person branch meetings quarterly,” he says. “The entire Eakes service team meets virtually at 7:30 a.m. every Wednesday. Two meetings each month are focused on some kind of product training; the other two meetings focus on technical knowledge-sharing.”

### Imagine Technology Group

Founded in 2011, Imagine Technology Group (ITG) is based in Chandler, Arizona (a Phoenix suburb), with additional locations in Tucson and Flagstaff. Currently, it employs 52 people, including — within the equipment service department — a director of service, a service manager and nine service techs. ITG’s imaging offerings: Sharp, Toshiba, Xerox, Epson, Brother, HP and Lexmark.

Wendy Hagerstrand, ITG’s director of service, joined the dealership in June 2021. Her previous office technology dealership experience was primarily in service, but also in sales. In fact, she also serves as ITG’s sales manager. On the service side, her strategy for success is simple — listen to

# Keys to a Successful, Modern Service Department



## Strategies



**Upskilling:** Have constant conversations, education and training, especially with new products.

**Automation:** Use predictive and preventative maintenance — with analytics — to support good business practices.

**Technology:** Artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented/virtual reality (AR/VR) will help improve service delivery.



## Stats



**30%** of workplace print revenue is derived from service and service-related programs.

Up to **50%** of all MFP support calls in the workplace are being resolved remotely.

**60%** of dealerships report remote service capabilities are essential to support hybrid workers.

Source: Keypoint Intelligence

“Our goal — and we’re pretty successful at it — is to always have some training in front of every single service tech. If you’re not continuing to learn in the service industry, then you’re going backwards.”



— Mike Nierman  
Eakes Office Solutions

techs rather than micromanaging them, she says. “I like to take what I call a ‘whiteboard approach’ to service,” she says. “I want feedback from our team members in terms of what’s happening in the field. Together, we work to address opportunities and take corrective measures.”

ITG’s most recent service team hire arrived a little over a year ago. “He is current military, serving in the Army Reserve, and has a background working on power generators,” Hagerstrand says, encouraging other dealers to consider hiring techs with military backgrounds as well. “He came to us with the ability to easily learn the equipment and with impeccable attention to detail; both have to do with his military background. We use him as an example all the time with our technicians: ‘Look at the remarks he put into the system.’ If anyone follows behind him, they’re going to know exactly what he did on the service call.”

Whenever possible, Hagerstrand likes to have a tech candidate “do a ride day with a senior tech as part of the interview process,” she says. “It’s ‘come see what we do for a day to see if it’s something you would enjoy doing.’” Such ride-alongs are not permissible in some states, including California, due to the liability, she notes. “Fortunately, in Arizona they are allowed.”

Once a tech candidate is hired, “we try to make sure everything is ready for him on day one — laptop, phone, networking connectivity and email,” Hagerstrand says. “He sits down with HR and then meets with someone in each department so that he understands what each department does. We then start the training schedule. This includes training courses through our HR company on topics such as customer service and training with our manufacturers. Sharp, in particular, has some phenomenal training for service techs, not just on imaging devices, but on software, F-ery controllers and whatnot.”

After the initial training “we do a lot with mentorship,” Hagerstrand says. “We have the tech ride with a senior tech the first few months; so, kind of buddied up with somebody.

When the new tech is out in the field those first few months, he is working and getting his feet wet, but has somebody to support him during that time.”

Hagerstrand emphasizes the importance of dealerships ensuring service tech candidates see the hiring company as a desirable place to work. “You need to make it exciting for somebody new to the industry,” she says. “You don’t want to

talk about how ‘we’re a copier repair company.’ We are so much more than that. In addition, talking about the ability for growth within your organization is really big. The new hire may start as a service tech, but needs to see the opportunity to move up through IT, solutions, production, etc.”

As a part of the ITG service team, techs: have the opportunity for performance bonuses; receive \$3,000 a year for

“You need to make it exciting for somebody new to the industry ... In addition, talking about the ability for growth within your organization is really big.”



— Wendy Hagerstrand  
Imagine Technology Group

car maintenance (beyond mileage); and participate in contests and team-building events. A recent contest “paired sales and service together,” Hagerstrand says. “We put some prize money toward the lowest callbacks and the lowest hold-for-parts for techs. We also had prize money for activity driven by sales reps. So, we paired sales reps and service techs to drive one another to reach their goals in order to win the

prize money. On the service side, one tech won \$100 the first week; in the second week, another won \$150.” ■

*Brent Hoskins, executive director of the Business Technology Association, is editor of Office Technology magazine. He can be reached at (816) 303-4040 or [brent@bta.org](mailto:brent@bta.org).*

