



Prime Industrial Recruiters

Tulsa OK

Executive: Chris Rawlings,
President & CEO
2001 sales growth: 60%
2002 sales growth: 52%
2003 sales growth: 100%



Chris Rawlings

Last year, **Prime Industrial Recruiters** lost its largest client but still managed to double its sales, said President and CEO Chris Rawlings. How? "I just took [business] from other staffing companies," he said. This eight-year-old Tulsa OK firm focuses solely on one kind of staffing: light industrial. Although it's a business fraught with challenges — such as obtaining workers compensation insurance at decent rates — Rawlings, 32, has built the one-office firm into a success.

He said he's picked up clients in the Tulsa market because they were looking for a vendor that knows the industrial and manufacturing business. Most competitors "specialize in nothing," Rawlings said. "Our customers understand we're not going into clerical." He added that his engineering background helps: "I grew up working in manufacturing shops. I have an appreciation for that kind of environment and understand it, so I can relate."

Today, Prime has 300 to 350 temp placements in the Tulsa area with an average bill rate of just over \$14 an hour. While Tulsa is a city of 400,000 and smaller than St. Louis or Kansas City MO, there are a large number of manufacturers there. Fortune 1,000 companies Interstate Brands and Aon Inc. have plants there; Prime also draws from a lot of small and midsize companies.

About those challenges: Rawlings said Oklahoma workers comp costs are skyrocketing and the unemployment tax has tripled (he pays up to \$30,000 a month in workers comp premiums). To compensate, he instituted a price increase; last May he raised them 2%. "Only one customer complained," he said. "I'm thinking of doing it again." Rawlings said he is on track to double sales this year; profit has risen 220% since 2001.

Rawlings advice to other staffing companies? "You'd better like competition. Everybody is trying to take your biggest customer every day." ◇

Light industrial *continued from page 8*

months of this year compared with the same period last year. Requests are coming from existing customers reactivating orders, rather than new clients, Putman said, adding that margins are still under pressure from price-cutting. "There's been so much distress in the industry in 2002 and 2003, with consolidation and downsizing and people going out of business, that some players sell only on price."

Dan McNulty started to see a pickup in light industrial business in the Wisconsin branches two or three months ago, but sector activity in Illinois is starting to turn. "We're doing all right," said McNulty, executive VP of **QPS Staffing Services Inc.** in Greenfield WI. "But our offices are still able to do a lot more business."

Sales are up 20% through April and they're not likely to dip much, he said. "[Customers] are giving us indications they're here to stay. It's not like before when it could be a two-week project."

Despite an unemployment rate higher than the national average, business in Washington for **Madden**



Hire Dynamics

Suwanee GA

Executive: Dan Campbell, CEO
2001 sales: \$4 million
2002 sales: \$7.7 million
2003 sales: \$9.5 million



Dan Campbell

This commercial and medical staffing company near Atlanta was opened in 2001 — the same year the nation's economy plummeted, taking staffing agencies with it. But **Hire Dynamics'** direction has been up ever since — almost doubling sales in 2002. It is on track to do \$16 million this year and gross profit is up 88% so far this year.

CEO Dan Campbell, who bought two Atlanta-area offices from Source One (and has since added a third in that city and one in Reno NV), said one of his secrets is focusing on employee talent. "I find people who have the capacity to run much larger operations so that I don't have to find someone to run and manage them when I open new offices."

He said his 36 internal employees keep close relationships with clients, who keep coming back. "They understand the culture and know what fits every client," he said. On the flip side, Hire Dynamics is picky about the clients it works with, something many agencies don't think about. "We have discipline at the front end. We make sure we pick up clients our field employees want to work for," Campbell said.

Also key to client retention has been service. His offices keep extended hours — "We're open on Saturday" — and the firm offers extras such as free seminars. For example, for the call center managers he works with — call center staffing is about 25% of sales — Hire Dynamics holds twice-annual forums to exchange ideas.

Clients range from Fortune 500 companies to small local businesses. About 55% of revenue is from traditional light industrial, 10% from clerical and 10% from the pharmacy staffing unit started in 2002. Of the latter, which is limited to pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, Campbell said, "It's harder to find people than clients." The unit is growing and the CEO said he expects the company to be one of the biggest pharmacy staffing providers in the Southeast within three to five years.

Campbell, 33, said he has strong support from partner John Neff, a former college roommate. They've nailed down a three-pronged philosophy of how to succeed: "Whoever has the best in-house talent wins, spend a lot of time building client relationships, and do what you say you will do." Campbell said he will continue to grow: "Our goal is to get to \$50 million by 2008 or 2010." ◇

Industrial Craftsmen Inc. is "going crazy," according to owner Beth Madden. The Beaverton OR-based firm just opened a Seattle office, where it services clients such as Boeing Corp. Most of its work is in heavy industrial — welders, machinists and construction workers. "Companies are cautiously hiring back people. We hear more and more about people adding another shift," Madden said.

Light industrial sales have been slower to pick up for Bangor ME-based **WorkSource Staffing Services** due to some paper mill closures, said President Julia Comeau. She saw encouraging signs last month, however, as some businesses started rehiring or requesting temporary workers. "They want to be optimistic but don't want to take people on," she said. ◇