

# SMALL Business Times

Reprinted from January 20, 2006



with **ROBERT LADD**

President  
Miles Data Technologies LLC



**COMPANY ADDRESS:**

N27 W23713 Paul Road, Pewaukee

**COMPANY WEB SITE:** [www.milesdata.com](http://www.milesdata.com)

**INDUSTRY:** Manufacturing/distribution information systems

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 18

**COMPANY'S ANNUAL REVENUES:**

\$10 million

**EDUCATION:** B.S. in manufacturing engineering, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

**FAMILY:** Mary Beth, wife, A.P. clerk; and children Cara, Brian, Erin and Nora.

**WHAT WAS THE SMARTEST THING YOUR COMPANY DID IN THE PAST YEAR?**

"Expand our service offerings from traditional barcode printing to include the newer 'auto-id' technologies of mobile computing and wireless infrastructures. This enhances our strategic advantage and enables us to successfully compete for large scale deployments of barcode and RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technologies."

**WHAT'S NEW AT YOUR COMPANY?**

"Our business model has changed drastically since 2000, when mobile computing-related products and services represented less than 25 percent of our business. Today, mobile computing represents closer to 60 percent of our business."

**DO YOU PLAN TO HIRE ANY ADDITIONAL STAFF OR MAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT CAPITAL INVESTMENTS IN YOUR COMPANY IN THE NEXT YEAR?**

"We have added 11 people to our organization since 2002 and expect to add several more technical support and sales

personnel in 2006. Our turnover rate is extremely low, and I have always felt that it is a key factor in maintaining our growth rate. Studies suggest that it takes between 6 and 18 months for an employee to start providing a return on the investment made in them, and I agree with that timeline. Once the learning curve has been completed, the contributions to the business increase exponentially. As a result, I am extremely careful about hiring decisions. In a small company, a wrong personnel decision can disrupt the organization and the overall productivity of the team. Also in 2006, we will need to address our main facility in Pewaukee. We are at capacity right now and are evaluating our options there."

**WHAT'S THE HOTTEST TREND IN YOUR INDUSTRY?**

"RFID technology continues to garner a lot of press, although the adoption rate has not quite met expectations. The widely publicized initiatives started several years ago at Wal-Mart and the United States D.O.D continue to move forward. However, various technical challenges have resulted in delays to their deployment schedules."

**DO YOU HAVE A BUSINESS MANTRA?**

"I have several that help guide me through challenging times. Everything usually happens for a reason, and if it doesn't feel right, don't do it. I also find that actively managing the little issues make the bigger issues easier to address."

**FROM A BUSINESS STANDPOINT, WHO DO YOU LOOK UP TO?**

"I was recruited by General Electric out

of college and went to work for them as a manufacturing engineer in their Aircraft Engine Division in Cincinnati, Ohio. This was in the mid '80's, and GE was being transformed from a large slow-moving behemoth, with an outdated military style organization structure, into a fast-paced, smaller company mentality with a flatter organization structure. Although I did not report directly to him, I benefited greatly by embracing Jack Welch's philosophies of running lean, operationally efficient and truly empowered organizations. I incorporated those strategies in my tenure at General Electric and continue to do so today in my own business. I want my employees to be empowered to think outside the box and become resourceful contributors to our business. The term Jack Welch used at GE was a 'boundary-less' organization.

**WHAT WAS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED?**

"If a business decision does not give you 'the right feeling in your gut', don't do it. Years ago, with some reservation, I brought a partner into the business, thinking it would drive growth for our organization. It did just the opposite by dividing our team into an old vs. new group of employees that could see the different business styles and goals of the owners. Fortunately I extricated myself fairly quickly from that scenario and never looked back. It actually became a good learning event by reinforcing what I believed was the right approach to succeeding in our industry."

 **Miles Data**  
**TECHNOLOGIES**

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