

The Company Story

This story is authored by the company's founder, David Simkins.
He and his wife, Lucy are the owners and active executive management of the organization.

The story often refers to "learning" experiences,
which is in itself a core value here at Mobile Plus.....

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**A Company that Services its Customer's needs
with the Reliability and Expertise of a Major Corporation,
yet has the Friendly, Caring Attitude of a Small Family Business**

**Whose Purpose is to Deliver Products and Services
that Enable Enhanced Communications**

**Which Provide a Higher Quality of Life
through: Enhanced Emergency Services
Increased Business Productivity
and Greater Personal Safety & Security**

**Who Introduces, Distributes and Supports
Technological Developments
while Assuring Superior Value**

**Constantly Changing Needs, Demand Understanding of
What our Customers Want, by Asking and Listening**

**Partnering with our Vendors and Distribution,
Ensures our Customers a Quality Experience
Resulting from Quality Components**

**Our Ability to Adapt and Develop
Enables us to Consistently Exceed Expectations**

**And in the Midst of Diversity we have Clear Vision,
never letting Being the Best keep us from Getting Better**

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The Company Story ("Lessons Learned")

Until faced with the exercise of putting it down in writing, we take for granted how we got to where we are.

As the significant events begin to form a story, the evolution of what we've become begins to make sense. Taking the experiences, the lessons, with us to draw on in the future.

So there, I've answered my own question of, "Why put The Company Story in writing?". Some of our staff know some of the lessons we've learned, that's cool. But they're much more valuable lessons, if everyone knows them and can draw on them.

And, if everyone knows what the company is about, then we'll have an advantage over 99% of businesses out there. So, here goes...

I kept wondering when I'd be able to say that we were a *real* company. When would it be *done*, fully baked, mature. I knew then when I started, working out of the trunk of my car, as well as I know now that a picture of how it *should* look is the guiding light. The fun/scary/ exciting part is that the picture is always changing.

For sure I agree with the ancient wisdom that success is not a destination but a journey. Some of our opportunities have been lasting sources of revenue for us; some were short term "learning experiences". Either way we grow and that's what it's all about. If you're not growing, you're dying.

I love it during employment interviews, when prospective employees ask if we have "growth opportunities" here. I say, "It's not only available, it's a requirement." I don't care if it's vertical, horizontal, or diagonal, everyone's got to grow. I've learned that given the choice and opportunity, everyone prefers the pursuit of excellence.

So there I was fresh out of dropping-out of high school, would-be class of '81, not for lack of desire for knowledge and learning, just a case of misguided energy. I've learned that past performance isn't necessarily a reflection of ability.

And so began my learning of how *not* to...

Stumbling around from job to job learning how not to run a business, how not to treat superiors, how not to treat subordinates, how not to treat customers. Some of these lessons were experiential (my own screw-ups), some were observational (other peoples' screw-ups).

Either way, I learned.

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As a burglar and fire alarm installer's apprentice I learned that people can achieve great things with focus and determination. Since I (the apprentice) thought I was so hot, I decided that I would learn quickly and be an installer myself, in half the time as usual. I did!

Then I learned that you should be careful of what you ask for, because you might get it. As my promotion to installer left me doing the work of two people, since the market for apprentices was lean.

When I jumped on an opportunity to install a car alarm in one of my employer's customer's cars, I learned that a little preparation could have relieved a lot of perspiration. It took a lot more time than I had anticipated, but I toughed it out.

When this guy told all of his friends, and those people told all of their friends, what a great job I was doing, I learned the power of word-of-mouth advertising and referrals.

When one of the ignition disabling devices that I had installed decided to have a mind of its own (while my customer was cruising up the Saw Mill River Parkway in the rain), I learned the value of quality products. Also the value of friends (in the towing business), and the value of having understanding customers.

I learned that I was always best at doing what I enjoyed doing. And what I had a natural passion for.

I built a healthy weekend business. I had business cards made up and got a kick out of seeing my name in print. This was exciting. I was a "pro" (my business card said so!) And so, I learned the power of positive visualization.

When I went out on my own and quit my "day job" for the freedom of (80 hours per week) entrepreneurialism, I learned that there's a lot more to owning and operating a small business than meets the eye. And so I learned the value of surrounding oneself with excellent people.

When an apprentice of mine drilled a hole in the gas tank of a diesel Mercedes sitting in the garage of our customer's brand new multi-million dollar home (which then smelled like a truck-stop for months), I learned that when delegating, one should be *very specifically detailed* about how to do a particular task if you truly desire a predictable result.

I also learned about the boss's responsibility for the staff's actions, that it may as well have been my hand on the drill. (I also learned about the diesel fuel absorbency of kitty litter, as we formed a circle around the Mercedes.)

When I was hired by a car alarm manufacturer to shame car dealership mechanics into installing their alarms properly, and these guys didn't welcome my "expert opinion". I learned that people need their own reasons for doing stuff.

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When I got fired after one week for not producing enough sales at the dealerships I was visiting, but I thought I was hired as an installation trainer, I learned the value of a detailed job description, with well defined expectations.

“How did you expect us to cover your salary?”, the owner asked. I didn’t really have a good answer, but I didn’t think that was my problem, until now. And I learned that every employee must carry their weight.

Having nothing to lose (being unemployed and all) I returned to those dealerships the following week with a clear determination as to why I was there and filled an order book. And learned that we’re all salespeople down inside, and when you believe you have nothing to lose, it can actually be kind of fun.

It took about six months before I had to face the reality that the *alleged* defects that I was hired to remedy in the first place were real. This stuff was pure crap. And I learned that people don’t buy products they buy other people. And that if you’re straight-up with your customers about your mistakes, they’ll forgive you (and in fact they’ll be so freaked out that they’ll do everything they can to *help* you)!

So now it’s 1983 and the Cellular Telephone industry was just beginning. Some said it was going to be really big. Maybe replace wired phones someday. The only things big then were the price tags and the hardware. For three thousand dollars, executive types could fill up their trunks with radio equipment and cruise around looking for a signal.

Around that time, a dealership contractor asked me if I new how to install car phones.

“Not only do I know how,” I enthusiastically speculated, “but I am the finest car phone installer you’ll ever have the opportunity to meet!”. There’s that positive visualization again. I got the job. I went to work on the car, scratched my head a little, figured it out and six or so hours later (it should have taken two) I emerged, a car phone installer!

This cellular business had a special attraction for me. The inspirational force was competition. I hate competition. I know it’s healthy and all that, but I just hate it. In the car alarm business, I was always bidding against more established firms with many years more experience and reputation. But with cellular phones, if I start now, on day one, no one will have more experience than me!

I *was* going to pursue my livelihood in Communications.

Over the next couple of years I built a car phone installation business. The hook was that I performed installations at the customer’s site. This was very convenient for all concerned, especially me who didn’t have a “location” of my own.

Car phone customers didn’t have to sit around all day waiting for their cars, and car phone stores didn’t have to entertain them sitting around all day. And I learned the value of building a business around relieving a customer’s frustration.

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About that time I hired a full time employee to help with the daily work load of installations and life was good. I enjoyed a flexible schedule, had loyal clients who paid my invoices on time, had a cooperative staff, and figured this was a fine way to make a living.

One sunny afternoon at the end of the summer of 86', I had finished the jobs for the day and went for a blast on my dirt bike to a local off-road riding area. On the way home I met up with some oncoming traffic which, after five reconstructive surgeries to the lower body, put me in bed for a year and a half. Also, I learned the value of a good motorcycle helmet (I keep the one I wore that day on a bookshelf in my office as a reminder, just in case I ever think I'm having "a bad day").

A significant chapter begins here, as my girlfriend Lucy takes over the business of scheduling, bookkeeping, etc... during a two month hospital stay (while maintaining her full time occupation as a retail store manager).

The point of all of this is that not being physically able to perform installations any more changed me and the course of the enterprise supremely. I learned to work "on" the business, as opposed to working "in" the business. Additional installers were hired and the business grew out of a "headquarters location" in a spare bedroom.

One of our major contractors, Metro One, who was one of two competing cellular carriers in our area, requested that we begin to perform warranty repair of the cellular phones that we were installing. Another example of building a business around simply relieving a customer's frustration.

In 1989 we established a small storefront location in south Yonkers, to facilitate the repair center. This was good timing, in that I had pretty much recovered from the motorcycle wreck and was ready for the next step in growing the business.

We requested that Metro One authorize us as a sales agent of their cellular service, so that we could offset some of the expense of the new location with the occasional retail customer.

"Mobile Installations Plus" was the fastest agency ever granted, and our involvement in the wireless industry deepened greatly.

Many late nights catching up on repairs, many more off-site installations by a reliable crew of installers. Office staff was expanded to accommodate order processing, book-keeping, sales, etc... What a pleasure, having the ability to putter around with phones, deal with clients, put out fires. I didn't care that I was working 10 to 12 hour days, seven day a week. It didn't *feel* like work.

Problem was, Lucy (now my wife) was coming in nights and weekends and straightening out the mistakes that I and my office staff were making, and at the end of the week we'd cash Lucy's pay check (from her "real job") and pay the office staff?! So we did the math, took the leap and brought Lucy in, full time.

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I'll always remember the day that I returned to the shop and taped to the outside office door was a paper plate. On it was written "100!". The first time we activated 100 cellular phones in one month! Man, we were juiced! (*Today our enterprise activates 100 new cellular subscribers before our morning coffee each day. That's almost 18,000 new subscribers each month.*) And I learned that the true source of motivation is productivity, not the other way around.

We outgrew that first location in two years, and the location after that in two more years. The installation force grew to eight technicians, we employed a sales force of ten outside door- to-door reps, and our inside support staff grew to six.

We searched out a bigger facility, one that we could grow into, instead of moving every two years. We found it, after looking at what seemed like a million other buildings.

We bought it, with the help of a local bank and the S.B.A., both of whom insisted that we actually *write* our business plan on paper. *There's a lesson in there somewhere.*

We loved it, a real office building, not just a garage dressed up like an office, but the real thing! At that time, 1993 (when our focus turned to wholesale) we occupied about 40% of the building. By 1999 we were starting to get creative in how to expand into the nooks and crannies. And in 2000 we bought a second building to facilitate our exponential growth, right next door.

So, our commitment redefined the way business is done in the industry. We asked what our Customers needed and wanted to enhance their experience with us. And we set out to exceed their wishes.

From the start we took a consultative approach, advising on how, using our program, Dealers can leverage their own resources to succeed in the communications business.

We really score when a Dealer shares the same level of commitment that we hold. In fact it's a point of differentiation for us. We don't sign up new Dealers, nor hire new staff members who say, "...I'll give it a try". We hold out for those who *know*, "...this is *exactly* what they've been looking for".

A rare approach, definitely more difficult, absolutely worth the effort.

The Short Version? Sure.

I had a series of bad employers that taught me how NOT to run a business. The only reason I started this company was because I was looking for a place that I could believe in, to sink my teeth into, and couldn't find it. So I started my own thing. It was a maturing experience because now instead of having one boss, *all* of our customers are the boss and if they're not happy, were all out of a job.

So now my #1 job is to ensure that this place remains that place I couldn't find. A place where people can go, to work, be excellent, be surrounded by others who are excellent, and be compensated fairly for their contribution. Not just in material compensation, but in appreciation & cooperation.

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Our best employees are those that have come through dysfunctional work environments, and have been looking for a healthier way. That's our first level of mission. Our "mission" spells out *why* we do what we do. (I'm kind of like an unrelenting four year old in that respect. I never stopped asking "WHY?")

All of us at Mobile Communications Plus have three levels of mission.

Firstly; **To be a contributing member of this healthy work environment.** Not just doing the work, but really being conscious of all "the little things" that could bring us nearer to or farther from our goals, individually and as a group.

Secondly; **To help our Dealers to grow a healthy business.** From rents and food on their tables, to saving for their dreams and goals, or whatever their particular motivation. Helping Dealers to receive life from their business, instead of having it drained from them.

Thirdly; **To help the world communicate.** We're not splitting atoms nor curing diseases here, but most people agree, that if we all communicated better, the world would be better off. Less misunderstandings, less arguing, less war... So by distributing communications technology we are, generally speaking, doing a good thing.

If any of us on any given day wonders *why* we're doing what we're doing, we have a lot to draw from.

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