

Friday, June 01, 2007

## Radiology on wheels pays off with success for local innovator

BY BEN STEPHENS

Taking his show on the road nearly six years ago appears to have paid off for Roger Faselt. His Las Vegas-based Quality Medical Imaging is among 10 small businesses being honored in New York next month.

Of the honorees, one will be dubbed the "Small Business Excellence in Customer Experience" winner of 2007. The national honor is awarded by Dell and the National Federation of Independent Business. The finalists were chosen from among hundreds of nominees that use the computer giant's products.

Faselt, a 17-year veteran of the healthcare industry, worked at Sunrise Hospital as an X-ray and ultrasound technician during the 1990s. Toward the end of his stint, he identified a niche market and flourished.

### FROM HOUSE CALLS TO THE BIG HOUSE

An associate of his wife was specializing in house calls. Faselt started QMI with a part-time radiologist in late 2001 to fill that doctor's imaging orders. It was the right target to get the company off the ground, he says, and the now 23-person mobile imaging company has shifted its focus to nursing homes and correctional facilities.

Faselt's around-the-clock firm offers portable X-rays, diagnostic ultrasounds, EKGs, Holters and bedside PICC catheter placement. It was the first local mobile company to offer bedside PICC-line services, and is the first and only company in the state to offer digital X-ray services, according to publicity materials.

Driving equipment to sites all over the valley in the company's nine-minivan fleet, technicians take images in the field and beam them to QMI headquarters in Summerlin, where they are stored on Dell servers. It is a point-of-care service, meaning patients are not loaded in the vans for testing.

Going digital meant a lot of up-front

cost, but it pays off on the back end, Faselt says. Digital imaging allowed QMI to deliver on its goal of "quality, quickly" and, as a result, the company says it has expanded its market share at a rate of more than 30 percent a year.

Digital images do not have the same capacity as their analog counterparts, Faselt acknowledges, but they are better to work with. "It's easier to read a digital image

because of how you can manipulate it," he explained, running a cursor over the image, showing how the contrast can be adjusted in real time for more precise analysis. Digital images also require a fraction of the storage space that film uses, they are more secure, and more accessible to both Faselt and his customers, he continued.

A Web-based system allows doctors to access the images within hours of placing an order with QMI. They also can request hard copies for archive or replacements, in case any records are lost.

### THE TINY ROOM

The increasing data capacity of servers means two things: increased storage of increasing-quality images. Faselt says the file room used to store analog prints was designed to be very small for a reason.

"The whole point is it was going to force us to go digital before that room was full," he said. He opened the refrigerated tower that contains the server in QMI's warehouse headquarters. The file room could fit at least a dozen of them and "we could easily store five rooms of x-rays on that server," Faselt said.



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Roger Faselt of Quality Medical Imaging sets up his mobile X-ray machine for transportation to patient site.

The technology is expensive, though. That's one reason Faselt thinks he doesn't have more competition. Last year alone, he says, QMI spent \$1 million on new equipment to outfit its new office. But that's what needs to be done if it wants to keep up with doctors' expectations.

"We didn't have a problem spending that kind of money if we can briskly grow," he said. There's one catch, though. Faselt can't charge a premium just because he's mobile. And the only way to compensate for charging an equal rate is growth, he says.

"Unfortunately, I don't get paid more to do a better job," he said, adding that his service costs about the same as an imaging center would charge. The tests themselves can run to a few hundred dollars on average. But in some cases, insurance companies save a lot on transportation costs.

### SAME-DAY SERVICE

Las Vegas internist Dr. Gregory Brian, whose Advanced House Calls makes about 600 home visits a month, has used QMI's services since the company opened. What continues to sell him, he

says, are its service and accessibility.

"I can always call and talk to Roger himself or his higher-level people," Brian said, adding that not all studies are cut and dried. "(A follow-up) probably needs to be done more than it is."

Many companies -- although he would not name any -- send sub-par studies, he says. They take longer to process orders, so patients whose conditions may warrant immediate attention instead wait at risk.

"Sometimes, I get the study faster if I send QMI to the house than if I send (patients) to the ER," he said,

acknowledging that most emergency rooms are crowded and that triage is a valid concern. "Most every study I order (from QMI), I get it done the same day."

Faselt says that although not all of his equipment was purchased through Dell, he gave it a shot entering the contest. "I feel pretty privileged to be among that kind of company," he added.

Finalists were selected through an application and review process by students of Vanderbilt University's Owen Graduate School of Management. A major criterion in the selection process

was how the companies used information technology to drive a significant change or develop a competitive advantage to deliver superior customer value and experience.

The winning small business will receive \$30,000 in Dell products and services, and a lifetime membership to NFIB, a small business-advocacy group. The winner also spends a day with Dell executives, including CEO Michael Dell, to share best practices at the company's headquarters in Round Rock, Texas.