

TIM ROSE LEADS Flyte Tyme TO NEW HEIGHTS

By Liz Hunter



Flyte Tyme in 4 years; it instead quadrupled. Financially speaking Flyte Tyme is currently 10 times the size it was in 1997.

Impressive growth has a reason. Rose says his forte is dealing with clients. “I consider myself to be good in all areas, but I most enjoy dealing with clients and spending time at their locations. Our job is to exceed expectations,” he says. “We work together in the best interest of the clients to get the job done.” Family is also a big part of the company’s success. Rose now calls Serafin his father-in-law, after marrying his daughter Doreen, who also works for the company as billing manager. “We’re a family business and everyone is involved and committed.”

Transforming the Company

Flyte Tyme’s growth can be attributed to several factors. When Rose joined 10 years ago, the company was almost a totally manual environment. The first thing on his agenda was moving the company onto a computer system, allowing for all areas of the business to be automated, focusing on one area at a time: accounting, billing, dispatch, then reservations. “We were the first client of Genisys when the advent of electronic reservations came along,” Rose says. At Garden State, he saw how automating the reservation process allowed the company to take more work and make more money. Automation gives his company a competitive edge, and he remains committed to the process. Rose knows that automation brings the desired result—customer satisfaction. Flyte Tyme is preparing to roll out a mobile device that not only allows drivers to communicate with the base, but can capture passenger signatures, making paper receipts a thing of the past.

So impressed was Rose with Genisys’ automation that he later hired industry automation expert and Genisys veteran Paul Murray as his chief information officer. “Not many companies have someone with his experience at their disposal for any technological advance the company wants to implement,” says Rose. “Having great technology in general allows for a snowball effect that will bring in additional work.” Murray says that an overriding client concern is Flyte Tyme’s ability to integrate its business procedures with that of the customer. He often gives technology presenta-

“You’ve got to be smart to be number one in any business. But more importantly, you’ve got to play with your heart, with every fiber of your body. If you’re lucky enough to find a guy with a lot of head and a lot of heart, he’s never going to come off the field second.” Vince Lombardi’s iconic Number One speech is an inspiration to many, but to Tim Rose, it’s his life credo.

Rose has certainly used both his head and heart to get to this point in life and business; reaching the top as president of Flyte Tyme Worldwide Transportation, one of the nation’s largest and fastest-growing ground transportation service providers. From its headquarters in Mahwah, N.J., Flyte Tyme now directs operations in Princeton, N.J. and a recently opened Philadelphia, Pa. branch. Add to that Flyte Line, its black car service division in New York City, and Flyte Tyme is responsible for over 500 vehicles and as many employees, who handle an average of 1,700 trips per day. Overall, the company has a combined annual revenue of approximately \$35 million.

Starting as a chauffeur during his college years, Rose steadily worked his way up. He began driving part-time for Garden State Limousine, owned by his brother and father. As time passed, he found he was a natural to the business and began to move on to different departments within the company—dispatch, operations and sales—before eventually getting into the management end of the business.

“When I started driving, we had five or seven cars,” Rose says. “We were looking for ways to grow the company. Nobody really had fleets, and if they did, they were somewhat fragmented. We worked with a limousine networking company that was a bunch of guys, each with one car working out of their home.” The network went bankrupt for a variety of reasons, and Garden State saw its opening. “We built our fleet from five cars to over 200.”

After his brother sold the business, Rose was left unemployed. He had to decide if he should start his own limousine service or go into a partnership. “I had a wife and kids and a mortgage, and you start thinking about how difficult it would be to start from scratch,” he says. As he surveyed his options, he had a conversation with Allen Serafin, owner of Flyte Tyme and a friend of Rose’s through the New Jersey State Limousine Association (now the Limousine Associations of New Jersey). Serafin was in his own business predicament. His partner had succumbed to lung cancer, and he was struggling to handle all the facets of the business alone. Rose says he was drawn to Flyte Tyme because it had been around since 1979 and felt its client base fit his style. Once the deal was done, Flyte Tyme couldn’t be stopped; Rose brought 150 clients with him over the next 3 years. Rose says he promised Serafin he would double the revenue of

tions to new clients, which is also a sales advantage. Murray can work directly with potential clients to show the systems in place to accommodate their needs.

After updating the operations, Rose says he next focused on the vehicle purchasing and financing process. Not afraid to be different, Flyte Tyme decided to make all of its vehicles platinum instead of black or white. "We found that black vehicles are harder to see at night, and there were less accidents reported for lighter-colored vehicles," says Rose. "Using platinum has been a valuable tool for clients in that it also differentiates us from the competition." Another innovation is the use of DriveCam, an onboard camera that is triggered in the event of an accident or heavy acceleration or deceleration, which is installed in every one of the vehicles. Rose says it has been a godsend. "The life cycle on tires has doubled. Brakes were being worn out in 3 months and we didn't know why. Once DriveCam was installed, we found out it was because the chauffeur drove the car aggressively."

Shuttle buses have been added to the fleet over the past few years, vehicles that Rose says are in use every day. In fact, the shuttles have become a unique selling point for Flyte Tyme, says Maria Amorosso, director of account development, enabling them to serve large clients with multiple sites in the metropolitan area. "We have a shuttle booking tool that is being used for several of our Fortune 500 companies," she says. Murray developed



the booking tool that allows employees of a company to log on to the website, see a company shuttle schedule, and view and reserve available seats. "The employee receives an e-mail confirmation and the drivers get up-to-the-minute notice of who is getting on the shuttle at each stop," says Murray.

Flyte Tyme is also one of the first in the industry to implement Trip Alert, an electronic reminder to clients the night before a pickup. "It has resulted in major cost savings," says Amorosso. "If someone booked a trip a month in advance and it slips their mind, this is a reminder in case any details changed since booking."

Flyte Tyme is also integrating with FleetBook, software that automates the farm-out process by transferring reservation data from back-office systems. Flyte Tyme has affiliates in over 350 cities—farm-out work accounts for 25 percent of its business. "We are using a lot of time, effort, and manpower doing confirmations for trips all over the planet, and FleetBook will let us automate and reduce costs dramatically," says Rose.

Besides re-evaluating technology, Flyte Tyme has had to diversify its business model. In 2001, Flyte Tyme's new 17,000-



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square-foot location in Mahwah was being built, and just before the company made the big move, 9/11 hit. "All of us in the travel industry lost 3 or 4 years of life cycle in business because of 9/11," says Rose. That's when Flyte Tyme moved into a new area of transportation with Flyte Line in 2002. The company obtained its black car license for New York, software from Aleph, and is now doing about 8,000 trips a week in New York City. "It has been great for us. Airport business is not a place to put all your eggs," says Rose. Still airport business is important—70 percent of Flyte Tyme's business is done at the airports. With flight delays up 23 percent, chauffeurs are feeling the impact. "The time for each trip is increased and there aren't as many turnarounds," says Rose. "What we've done is try to hire more airport concierges. On top of that, we have to educate our clients about the delays and which airports are the worst."

Industry Issues

As fuel costs skyrocket, all limousine businesspeople are thinking of creative ways to recover. Clients are beginning to ask about green initiatives, says Amorosso. "We are in the midst of researching the best fit for us with our clients. And one thing we have to consider is the cost. There is going to have to be a partnership if a client wants us to go green, and one thing I can say about our clients is they are all about partnerships." Rose says there are no commercially ready "green" options available for Flyte Tyme right now. "We have some hybrids in our fleet and we've



Flyte Tyme reservations agents with Rose, (third from right)

partnered with OZO Car in New York for clients who are interested in it," he says. "But is this going to offset the amount of carbon we produce? Of course not." Flyte Tyme does allow some employees to work remotely, using broadband access and a remote desktop application. Offsite employees can dial-in, log on, and Flyte Tyme can make their phones ring. Rose says that anyone who does not add fuel surcharges to a client's trip costs is kidding themselves. "It has almost become standard, unless an operator can build it into the price. But that's something we'd rather not do. We use an adjustable surcharge based on the Department of Energy rates in that area of service."

Rose is also the president of the Limousine Associations of New Jersey (LANJ), so he knows a thing or two about dealing with legislative issues. "We've been fortunate in New Jersey



Paul Murray works on equipment in the server room

because we organized early, raised money, and got a lot of good companies and people involved on the board,” he says. Some issues in the state that Rose has helped fight include updating the limo law, repealing the sales tax on service, workers’ compensation classification, and the Paid Family Leave Act. We’ve been successful because of the committed, hard-working board members and our Executive Director Barry Lefkowitz.”

testing and finger-printing. Retaining employees is a top priority for Flyte Tyme. Through a PEO, or a professional employer organization, the company is able to offer employees a myriad of benefits including medical, dental, and vision. “We don’t want our employees worrying about where their next paycheck is coming from, we want them to take care of the customers,” says Rose.

Rose believes it’s worthwhile to get away and recharge your batteries whenever possible. “Last December we did 85 holiday parties in 18 nights. By the 21st or 22nd of December we were all fried,” he says. “But then instead of sitting here in the office that week until the 31st, you need to step away and sit under a palm tree somewhere.” For Rose, that palm tree is on Marco Island, off of the western coast of Florida. “If you let yourself get burnt out, the stress in this business will kill you.” But Rose can’t relax for long. Further expansion of Flyte Tyme is on the horizon. This time the company is heading north, into Westchester, New York, and Connecticut.

Rose has contributed a significant amount of effort to making the company what it is today, and he’s not finished. Rose has Lombardi’s Number One speech in his office. Every time he looks up from his desk, Rose is recharged by Lombardi’s words: “It is a reality of life that men are competitive and the most competitive games draw the most competitive men. That’s why they are there—to compete ... The object is to win fairly, squarely, by the rules—but to win.” **LD**

Everyday Operations

Having been in the business for many years, one wonders how Rose keeps a fresh perspective. “Like in any successful business, it’s about the people. “One thing you have to do is stay in contact with key managers about initiatives and get involved in decisions that will affect the business.” Rose says his managers running Flyte Tyme’s various locations are dedicated to the company. Dispatch is done locally, enabling Flyte Tyme to use a core of chauffeurs who know the geography of the local areas. Chauffeurs are carefully selected and must complete the Smith System training to ensure that Flyte Tyme is getting a top-quality candidate. They are also subjected to drug