

Success story

A Niche Market Success Story

Cameron and Company Inc.® – “The Pharmacists’ Registry”®

An Employee Owned Company

By **Ronald G. Cameron**, CEO

The road to finding a niche in the temporary help industry began for me over 30 years ago when I got the idea of a pharmacists’ registry while I was working as a rotating pharmacist.

I constantly saw managers struggling and rearranging schedules to cover for sick or vacationing pharmacists. I realized there was a great need for a registry and decided to go for it. I opened Cameron and Company Inc. “The Pharmacists’ Registry” in January 1970, which became the country’s first pharmacists’ registry. I had one employee – myself! And one client – my previous employer. It took nearly five years for the idea to truly catch on.

One area of great difficulty I encountered when I started was trying to convince prospective clients of the saving in using this service. Unfortunately, these medical professionals were not really attuned to the business world. They didn’t understand their true cost of labor and all of the hidden expenses and administrative proceedings associated with hiring permanent help. It took a long time to change their attitude about the reliability and cost-effectiveness of temporary help.

Eventually, the idea did catch on and today we’ve carved a permanent niche in the industry as a specialist. We now have over 30 offices, which stretch from Hawaii to the East Coast. We have over 500 full and part-time employees and have serviced over 5500 different clients in the last 30 years.

Cameron and Company Inc. is now used virtually by every major

chain store, but we also provide coverage for pharmacists and technicians in hospital, retail and independent settings. We’ve been in the business a long time and we take pride in the cost-effective, efficient and reliable services we provide to our clients. There are three things we do: (1) We do not misclassify our pharmacists employees as independent contractors (IRS Ruling 87-41); (2)

we carry a full comprehensive insurance package to protect our clients and employees (Certificate of Insurance) and (3) we personally interview, screen, qualify and credential all our pharmacists in our offices! We do not hire over the phone.

Gone are the days of convincing clients that everything will be all right in the staff pharmacist’s absence. Our pharmacists are good. We know it and the clients know it.

Our motto has always been: “If we can’t send you a qualified pharmacist, we won’t send you anybody at all!” We don’t fill orders just to bill an 8-hour shift. Cameron and Company Inc. abides by all Immigration and Naturalization laws as well as guidelines set forth by the Drug Enforcement Agency and Board of Pharmacy. In addition to Cameron and Company Inc.’s insurance coverage, all of our pharmacists carry their own malpractice insurance and are routinely evaluated by the managers of the pharmacies in which they work.

When selecting our temporary pharmacists, we look for the person who can adapt quickly to changing

surroundings. Pharmacists who don’t like being tied down to one location every day really benefit from our service. In fact, a registry very often turns out to be a good alternative for many female pharmacists. The flexibility associated with temporary work is very appealing to women who work and have families of their own. We work around their schedules and hopefully make it a little easier for them to balance work and free time.

Initially, we recruited applicants simply through newspaper classifieds, but today, our approach includes targeted promotions in trade journals, the Internet, on our website, pharmacy schools, direct mail and even trade shows. About 20 percent of our workforce are full-time temporaries. We offer a comprehensive benefits package better than in the permanent workplace.

Cameron and Company Inc. has traveled a long road. It hasn’t always been easy, but in the end it’s been a fruitful journey. It certainly proved to be the right marketing decision for us. If I could share one bit of advice to those who may be considering niche expansion, it would be this: Know your product!

Specialization is always a key marketing tool, but to make it you’ve got to know your own industry. If you don’t, how can you properly service your clients? Every occupational niche has its own unique terminology that must be mastered; every nuance must be recognized.

Thorough market research, product knowledge and quality service will give you the edge you need. ■

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