

Member Profile:

Posty Cards Sends Customers the Message of Sustainability

Posty Cards®

This month we spoke with **Erick Jessee**, president of **Posty Cards** in Kansas City, Missouri. This firm was founded in 1948 by illustrator **Carl “Posty” Postlethwaite** with the launch of his first line of greeting cards for the insurance industry. Erick is Posty’s grandson.



Q. As an introduction for our readers, give us the 10,000 foot view of your company.

A. We are a third-generation, family-owned manufacturer of personalized business greeting cards. Our customers –businesses and organizations of all sizes– use our products to build customer and employee relationships. Our products primarily include birthday cards, all-occasion cards, holiday cards, and calendars.

Q. How did you move up through the ranks to become president?

A. After 12 years of business and management experience in Silicon Valley, I joined the family business in 2001 as general manager with the intent of taking on an increasing role in modernization of our company. I followed my father, Lance, as company president in 2010.

Q. How has your firm coped with the recession?

A. We have taken our hits like everyone else. The marketplace in our niche has become more competitive, yet Posty Cards seems to have an edge in efficiencies and growing our customer base beyond sectors like insurance and real estate. Our internet presence has significantly helped draw in new business despite the economic hard times. We are fortunate and very pleased that we’ve been successful enough to avoid any layoffs so far.

Q. How have you been able to maintain the long tenure with your employees?

A. We are extremely fortunate to have a great group of employees, some of whom have been with us for 20-30 years. Our owners and managers strive to cultivate a “family atmosphere” in the company and we truly care about our employees. We see the great work environment and benefits translate into wonderful employee loyalty with our average tenure in the 15-20 year range.

Q. What can you tell us about your sales and marketing efforts?

A. We presently don’t have any sales people so we primarily market via direct mail and the web. Posty Cards is very active in marketing, and we still believe in the value of sending catalogs

to current customers. We find that the catalogs drive business to our website where orders can be placed online. We also do email marketing and send out post cards to build awareness.

Q. What technology have you added recently?

A. Our focus in 2011 has been on our building expansion. The building systems, such as our solar panels, HVAC installation and computerized lighting controls are state of the art. We installed a digital production press early in 2010, which we use to print photo/logo cards and other short run custom jobs.

Q. What is distinctive about your company?

A. “Green” has been an initiative since I joined the company in 2001. We constantly try to upgrade processes to become more green – innovative packaging, designs that reflect environmental concerns, which is our “Sustainable Sentiments™” line, as well as using soy ink, FSC paper, recyclable and biodegradable packaging, etc. All of this helps our customers project a positive green image to their customers and employees. In line with that, sustainability is at the center of our building expansion and renovation.

Q. Tell about This Major Expansion and Renovation Project.

A. We are very serious and committed to high environmental standards. Construction is under way on a 25,000 square-foot addition and remodel of our office and manufacturing plant. It’s a \$6.4 million dollar project that will double our current space. It will feature the largest solar photovoltaic panel installation in the Kansas City region generating 11% of our total power use. Also we will have 100% solar heated water. To heat and cool the facility, we have installed a state of the art variable refrigerant volume HVAC system, which is about 45% more efficient than standard commercial systems. The building will make extensive use of natural lighting with artificial lighting controls. Rain water reclamation will be used for irrigation and flushing toilets. For materials, we are using low impact and recycled materials as much as possible such as low VOC paint, 100% recycled carpeting, low flow plumbing fixtures, and used furnishings. We’re currently seeking LEED platinum certification for the facility. If we achieve that we’ll have the first LEED Platinum manufacturing facility in the United States. We expect completion in Spring of 2011.

Q. How Did You Fund this Project?

A. We could not have done it without support from several sources. The Kansas City Community Development Entity provided \$6 million in New Markets Tax Credit allocation authority for this project. We were also eligible for tax credits from the State of Missouri’s New Markets Tax Credit Program, the Federal Solar Energy Investment Tax Credit Program, and State of Missouri Enhanced Enterprise Zone State Tax Credit Program. That’s just to name a few of them.

Q. When not running a printing company, what do you like to do in your spare time?

A. While directing a major plant expansion I’ve found that “spare time” isn’t in the cards, unfortunately. What time I do have I enjoy spending with my wife, Christie May, and my daughter, Joanna. We also try to stay active in our church and community.

Editor’s note: The new Posty Cards facility will soon be featured in the Nov./Dec. issue of Greenability magazine.