

FAMILY CULTURE, SMALL COMPANY FEEL



Corporate Profile

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Great Dane

ASPEN
TRANSPORTATION

5378

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ASPEN

USDOT 246156
VIN 9J110740
GVW 80,000

Aspen offers
warehousing,
distribution,
transportation
and value
added services

ASPEN LOGISTICS: FAMILY CULTURE, SMALL COMPANY FEEL

A family run logistics company that has provided supply chain services since 1978, Aspen has transitioned with the second generation into the new century

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Produced by Lorraine Heist

A woman owned business with revenues of about \$60 million and more than 600 employees, Aspen Logistics of Salt Lake City, UT has branches in California and offers warehousing, distribution, transportation and value added services.

Founded by Dan Sample, a man in tune with his customers and his employees and who believed in having a very personal relationship with them, the company is now run by his daughter Connie Anderson, who took the helm in 2000 and has maintained that personal touch, which sets it apart from other businesses of the same size.

OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

"Nowadays, every one says 'it's not personal, it's business' but Dad insisted that it is personal," says Anderson, who has spent most of her career in logistics and actually worked for a major competitor for eight years in Connecticut before

moving back to work with her father.

Since her husband's job was on the East Coast, she relocated to be with him. Her employer back then was USCO Distribution and the owner knew her father. Anderson learned the ropes, starting in marketing and moving to operations. The company was later purchased by Kuehne & Nagel, the leader in global and third party logistics.

When she was looking to move on, her father asked her to come work for him, something she did not expect would happen until much later. She did a rotation of departments at Aspen too, starting in sales, and then moving into operations before becoming the president nine years ago.

Anderson lives and works out of her home in Carlsbad, CA where she moved with her three sons when her husband was transferred. Now that he has started his own business in internet marketing and product development, they have



Forklift on the move in the warehouse

had a role reversal, with him staying closer to home while she travels more. She is on the road 10 to 15 days in a month, but says her commute is not so bad, since the facilities in California are an easy drive from her home and Salt Lake City is an hour's flight.

FRESH BLOOD, REMOTE OFFICES

Since taking over, she has made some significant changes to the business, starting with bringing in a wide variety of people to handle different aspects of management, since the company has doubled from the 300 employees it had during her father's time.

"I've taken it to the next level. Things have changed a lot since Dad's times and I've brought it into the new century. I've hired new management and they keep up with the social networking and other trends," she says, attributing the company's success to having a great team.

She heads an executive team of seven people who oversee human resources, finance, marketing and operations. About half of them are based in Southern California, like her, while the others are in Utah and Ohio.

This is an unusual arrangement for a transportation and logistics company but Anderson and her team have figured out a way to make it work and work well for them.

Aspen utilizes modern communications technology to drive its strategic initiatives and stay in constant contact with all areas of operations. "We also set objectives and keep score cards and we have monthly reviews, not just financial reviews but also for operational trends. And we do associate surveys, to see if managers are doing what they are supposed to do," Anderson explains.

Speaking about the company's human resources policy, she says employees who leave

thinking the grass is greener on the other side often come back, because they miss the benefits and the work atmosphere that Aspen provides. "We're a lot more willing to work through problems and family issues with our employees than others; it's not all cut and dried."

GROWTH AND EXPANSION FINANCED INTERNALLY

**"I've taken it to the next level.
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since Dad's times and I've
brought it into the new century."**

Connie Anderson, CEO

Aspen's transportation division has grown considerably under Anderson, with a new warehouse set up recently in Ontario, CA and another California facility in the works. Before she took over, the transportation business was concentrated only within Utah. But in the last several years, it has had significant growth and now serves the food and confectionary industries, in addition to pharmaceuticals, pet food and pet products.

Aspen has four facilities in Utah, four more in Southern California, a warehouse in Columbus, Ohio and the next facility set to begin operations in November. Anderson thinks that they could have grown much faster, but since they preferred to finance the growth with internal financing rather than take on debt, this held them back



Aspen recently opened a new warehouse in Ontario, CA

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FACTS AT A GLANCE

ASPEN

ALLIANCE GROUP

COMPANY NAME: Aspen Logistics

PRESIDENT & CEO: Connie Anderson

OPERATIONS: Warehousing, transportation, distribution and value added services such as IT.

ESTABLISHED: 1978

EMPLOYEES: 600+

REVENUE: \$60 million

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from certain growth opportunities.

"We didn't want to take on debt in this economy, so this does stretch us thin some times, but we've managed to do well so far," she says.

WEATHERING THE ECONOMY

Anderson says Aspen has done alright during the recession, mainly because it focused on being lean and frugal and also because it had new business coming in. The management team is given the flexibility to adapt as needed, while being held accountable.

Aspen understands the advantages of investing in information technology "It's definitely a driver in the directions Aspen is



Aspen
utilizes the
newest
technology

heading towards. In this day and age, if you don't understand IT, it could break you," she says, adding, "A lot of our IT guys came through operations, so when they develop tools, it has relevance to our operations."

Warehouse services form the biggest chunk of the business, followed by transportation. Value added services such as software consulting services for its clients have become an extension of the bundle of services Aspen provides its customers, mostly on request.

Frequently, these services are in the form of building a platform to bridge the different software systems the client uses and some times Aspen is asked to develop a system for the client

to manage their loading yards.

Aspen acts as the logistics arm for Wrigley's, Mars, Home Depot and Abbott Labs, among other customers. It delivers their products to retailers such as WalMart, Target, Costco, Albertsons and Pet Smart. Aside from servicing retail stores, it also makes deliveries to hospitals, for pharmaceutical products and to veterinarians, for pet products.

This requires shifting gears on a frequent basis, not just from a retail store to a hospital, but some times from one store to another.

Confectionary is a niche market that the company has staked a claim on. "If you buy candy anywhere in California, chances are we delivered it," Anderson says. ■



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