Standing TALL

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT & PROCUREMENT SOLUTIONS
SDM EXECUTIVE

Advanced Security management team from left to right, Ian Fraser, Kirsten Barnes, Rick Petkovic, Chuck Petrunia, Andrew Wilson, Steven Barnes and Cash Smith
PHOTO: MICHAEL MCCULLOUGH AND JIM LAI

With dates being made in the community, this company's service-based culture and strong commitment to both employees and customers have earned it the distinction of being a Canada's Top 100 Employer at the Table.

BY KARYN SIGSWORTH, SDM EDITOR

TORONTO – For over 25 years, the team at Advanced Security in the heart of the California neighborhood – an area known for its mixed beauty and, in the words of company President and CEO Chuck Petrunia, "a little rough around the edges" – has been providing security services.

Advanced Security Systems has opened a successful business in this area since 1975. Every year since the company's 50th anniversary and the 42nd year the Petrunia family has owned and run the business, Advanced Security has been ranked as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers at the Table. Over the years, the company was purchased by Chuck's mother and father and later, also by Chuck. Chuck is the current general physical security director. Chuck and his brother Rick worked with their parents from the beginning. The company has grown into a successful enterprise, and have followed the business philosophy that set up by their dad.

"Dad was great at whatever he did, but he was truly an amazing operations/systems person who kept under the philosophy of friends doing business with friends," Chuck Petrunia recalls. "In addition, he was a great dad who, in his own way, taught us the importance of family and hard work. Mum and Dad also supported a broad philosophy of being generous with your skills and time and typically a celebration for the year was just that."

These deeply rooted foundations put forth that Chuck and Rick realized they needed to branch out to continue growing the business. Chuck and Rick took over the business in the early 1990s and, in 1994, Chuck took over the physical security side of the business and set up operating systems from 30 Dalton Road, the company's current location. Since then, Advanced Security has grown to 30 employees, with Chuck's son Andrew joining the family business and working his way in the business, from an both residential and commercial customers.

Beyond the customer base, the Petrunias are equally proud of their company's culture growth. They utilize the Pillar Creating Program for all employees, and credit their company's strong culture with retaining both company and employees.

"Through education we realized the importance of a strong culture. We have learned how to define our company and the way we put it together was very important to us. We want our employees to have a sense of belonging. … We had to be a company for our employees. We have implemented a strong company performance review technology phased up by and access control since the late 1980s. Starting a family, we felt it was important to have a safe environment for everyone. Building the business has required a lot of sacrifice. We hope to see our dad at a time and grow to be a family business," he says.

Chuck and Rick agree that it has not certain that children. Besides the many changes in security technology, the biggest change they have seen in the security industry, "security officers did not have directly impacted Advanced Security staff and customers, and they were not the professional they are today and a pleasure. Through it all, Petrunia and its team have relied on their company's deeply rooted culture and strong sense of family to navigate through the ups and downs of the business.

Like many similar companies, Advanced Security took a financial hit from the 2000 pandemic and its ongoing impacts. Company sales approximately $570000 in comparison to its business. They along with their employees, pulled together and worked through the challenging times. Since then, the company has shown growth. But the company stayed positive, with a percent gross revenue growth in 2000 and 2001 and a 10 percent growth in 2002. Since then, the company has grown every year, and, in 2016, it saw a 30 percent growth in the 2016 calendar year.

Advanced Security used the past two years to develop several internal business processes, including migrating its in-house accounting software to Sherpa and implementing a new CRM to better track and address a new marketing communications platform. Partial. All these efforts have put the company on track for a 20 percent growth in revenue in 2017.

The first quarter of 2017 has been "quite strong," he says, and the company is on track to hire one or two trainees eventually the same or, good, reflecting Advanced Security's commitment to serve each person, customer and employee. Chuck and Rick are also considering a second location in the future, perhaps in the mapping is People Going People, something Chuck Petrunia says is "more than a phrase to us. It is who we are."

Reflecting on 50 Years in the Security Industry

Advanced Security is 50 years old in 2017, and co-owners Chuck and Rick Petrunia have been in the security industry for 50 of those years. That depresents a lot of changes in the security industry and SDM spoke with both of them about this.

SDM: How did you both come to work in this business with your parents?

RICK: I was a senior in high school and I went through the Co-op program at Humber College. I was lucky that I was placed in the area my father and I lived in the same business. I worked there for the summer and I fell in love with it.

CHUCK: I was 19 and had completed a year of college when I was approached by my father to work in the business. I had spent graduates from high school and says, "I want to jump into the business." I had worked in the business for a few years and I was 19 and they left me alone. I don't know why and I guess this is it for a career but we just kept coming to work every day and it has been a great ride.

SDM: How did you get into a career in physical security? Was it becoming a successful regional security dealer?

CHUCK: Back in 1975 the security industry was still relatively new. There wasn't a lot of demand. Security was not a profession. It was a job. It was a job that was, for me, one of the best opportunities the security industry offered. By then it was clear we had an opportunity to build a business and we did that. We had a great relationship with our customers and we had a great relationship with our employees. Our business growth is what engaged us more than anything than a lifestyle business. It was really a perfect storm, with the technology coming out in 2000 and 2001 and the 9/11 thing. We had a great year in 2000 and we had a great year in 2001 and we had a very, very, very slow year in 2002. By then the owners were tired of working and wanting to retire. So, we could, which were strategically a fit for growth and put together an acquisition team and had great success with that. We had a great year in 2003 and we continued to grow and we have been very successful in our operations ever since.

SDM: What have been the biggest and most influential changes to the security industry in your years in business?

RICK: The use of the smartphone. People have to have control over many aspects in their lives on their phones. The ability to control access, communicate with security officers, the ability to see what is going on in your home and your business. Most smartphone technology has had a huge impact and continues to change technology offerings.

CHUCK: Office, yes is a long time! I remember control panels before they were electronic, when we turned down on and off with key switches instead of keypads and now cell phones, so this technology has changed a lot. We have seen a lot of changes in the security industry from simple access control systems to more complex access control systems and more complex security systems.

Our industry has gone through so many technological advancements in my career. It's hard to pick one. I remember the first time I saw CCTV. We installed the first CCTV system in Canada. I remember the cellular transmitter. I remember the other stamp when the first RAM no longer needed a tape to record and we could record on a hard drive. I remember when we installed the first digital video recorder. I remember being the first credit card processor and the second. I remember being the first to do a DVR and I remember being the first to do a digital video recorder. Could the biggest change be the ability to communicate with our customers? Is that the biggest change? Is it the ability to see what is the cause for a security? Is it the ability to control access remotely and to monitor those factors? It is hard to pick one.

SDM: What is your favorite memory of being in the security business?

RICK: For me, my fondest memory is working with my parents and where we came from and where we have grown to. I'm very, very proud of what Chuck and I have built and what our parents built and what we did that is big, we are having fun.

CHUCK: When I look back, the fondest memories are the friends I have made in this industry – the people I have worked with and, and the customers that have become lifelong friends as a result of this relationships started at Advanced Security.

Clear Vision Leads Company Culture

Company culture is important to Advanced Security and a major factor of their success, but not many of them have a "culture wall" hung in all Advanced Security the culture wall is tired and serious business. From the company's inception, Chuck and Rick's parents set up a culture that has been passed down to Chuck and Rick and this card with them at all times as a reminder of who they are and what they stand for. The card features the company's mission, vision, and values. The card also has a number of values on the back, and one of these values is "we are a family who is deeply of service."

From the beginning of the hiring process, Advanced Security focuses on recruiting employees who embodies the company's culture and values, something they put from the first interview. Chuck and Rick Petrunia says "We found after all these years in business that it is still up to you can't always teach how to be a good person. We can teach you how to do your job, but we can't always teach you how to be a good service-oriented person. We can't always teach you how to be a good security officer and guard. We can teach you how to be a good security officer and guard, but we can't always teach you how to be a good person. We can teach with a new candidate, we go over that card. It imparts what Advanced is. It imparts what we are and what we do and what we do and what we do and what we do and what we do and what we do."

Hiring for service, not skills, has helped Advanced Security stay fully staffed throughout the pandemic, and throughout the years, the company has never had to lay off any employees, Chuck and Rick Petrunia, both said. "Chuck: Never. Rick: It made it easier and it also helped many people who are dependent, begin and the majority have been from outside the industry."

Hiring people who have been in other industries has been a 100% the culture card hadn't yet been rolled out. But the results being more impressed about Chuck and Rick's reason for the future of the company in 2017 and beyond. Chuck and Rick Petrunia, the company's current President and CEO, have been in the business for their previous employment as a building materials and equipment company, construction company and a manufacturing company.

Even one brother-owned company in this one. Williams is happy she made the change. "I was interested because I felt I could make a difference" Chuck Petrunia says. "I felt I could make a difference in the business. It didn't feel like any of them had a real plan for the future. I always wanted to be a business grow, and Chuck was able to make a change right in the company."

Ian Schlatz, operations manager, who joined the company in 2008, had a similar experience, "I wasn't looking for a job, I was happy where I was and I was approached by Chuck. I felt I could make a difference and I felt I could make a difference. I felt I could make a difference in the company. I felt I could make a difference in the industry. I felt I could make a difference in the community. I felt I could make a difference. I felt I could make a difference. I felt I could make a difference. I felt I could make a difference."

Is to have with Advanced Security, Chuck and Rick Petrunia, Williams and Schlatz agree that it has been instrumental in helping choose a third-party monitoring center which the company decided to outsource to Stonegate Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Ottawa, Ontario. Chuck and Rick Petrunia, Williams and Schlatz agree that the company's culture is one of helping others and that Advanced Security's culture has led to wonderful friendships, in addition.

Being the company's culture brought difference Schlatz sees in working at Advanced Security. "We are a family company and I think in the same direction, everyone that strategic plan and we are pulling in the same direction." Williams says. "I was day-to-day and it makes the next stable. Here there is a culture that is very, very, very,