

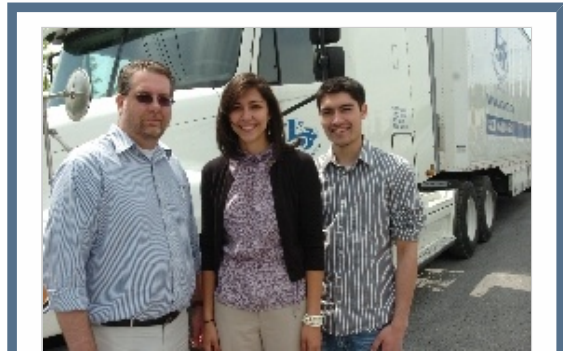
Temple moving and logistics firm keeps on trucking

The company thrives even in a down economy.

By David A. Kostival
Reading Eagle Correspondent

5/18/2009

While many companies are downsizing and laying off employees, there are still some businesses that are thriving in spite of a tough economy.



Reading Eagle: Tim Leedy

James B. Fry, owner and chief executive of L&J Transportation Cos. Inc., Temple, with daughter Stephanie R. Fry, operations manager, and son Chris M. Fry, Webmaster.

L&J Transportation Cos. Inc.

Address: 36 Mountain Side Road, Temple

Phone: 610-921-2063

Chief executive: James B. Fry

Operations manager: Stephanie R. Fry

Webmaster and sales: Christopher M. Fry

Founded: 1989

Employees: 50

Web site: www.ljmoving.com

L&J services

Household relocations: local and long-distance moves and corporate employee relocations; locations in Pennsylvania, New York and Delaware

L&J Logistics: full-service brokering and consulting company; specialty freight

International relocations: handles all of the details of an international move

Logistics division: Specialty freight delivered to 48 states

L&J Transportation Cos. Inc., Temple, is one such business that continues to hire new employees.

James B. Fry, 46, chief executive of the family-owned moving and logistics company, said he isn't really surprised the firm is doing well, because he started the business during a recession in 1989.

"A recession is absolutely the perfect time to start a business," Fry said. "There are so many deals to be had and the slow economy gives you time to get all of your ducks in a row."

Fry credits a good portion of his company's success for a business decision the company made not long ago.

"A few years back we changed our focus and began a second division offering logistics services, specializing in..."

A few years back we changed our focus and began a second division offering logistics services, specializing in delivering store fixtures and organizing store openings," he said. "That brought us a tremendous amount of business, and that side just keeps growing.

"We're now seeing spikes in the business, I can't be sure if we are an anomaly or if this is the beginning of an economic recovery. But we are seeing life in this business."

Fry said his company always looks for business which competitors may not want.

"We always strive to find a niche," he said. "We recently became an international company by becoming incorporated in Canada. A lot of transportation companies don't want to deal with Canada because of new customs laws. We saw that opportunity and jumped on it."

Fry said the company recently signed a carrier contract with North American Van Lines, which he said will open more opportunities for growth. Although Fry admits that the recession did hit his company, he said there was still good news for him.

"For 20 years, we would see double-digit growth each year," he said. "In 2008, we only saw an 8 percent growth in business, but the good news is that it's still growth. And now in 2009, we are in a hiring mode, especially drivers and laborers.

"We really focus on education and training for our employees. No one ever grows up wanting to be a mover or a truck driver, but now we realize that there is a real need for those jobs."

Fry said his drivers make \$40,000 to \$80,000 a year to start.

"We want to get the word out that moving and freight offers a lot of career opportunities," Fry said. "This one of the largest growing sectors in Pennsylvania in terms of employment."

Fry credits the infrastructure in Berks County as being a real plus for growing a transportation firm.

"We are becoming the major metro area in the state, behind Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, because of infrastructure," he said.

One other reason for current growth may be related to unemployment, Fry said.

"This economic downturn started to happen in 2007," he said. "People who got hit have now had their unemployment benefits run out, which results in people having to move to find work."

In addition, Fry said that although the logistics side of the business specializes in store openings, the current vast amount of store closings also brings business to L&J.

In the end, Fry said, the real reason a business can succeed in bad economic times is because of hard work.

"Part of it is your mentality," he said. "I do see this as the time to build business. It may be a harder time but business doesn't come on its own. You have to work at it in order to control the process that keeps customers coming back."

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