

100-Year-old Document Storage Company – Text Book Example of What it Means to “Pivot”

There are few US companies that have roots going back over 100 years. According to [Crain’s Business](#), for those companies that are part of such an elite group, they most likely share three key factors explaining their successful succession: 1) Strong corporate mission, culture, 2) Strength through change management, and 3) Employees feel valued. RhinoDox, a family owned, and operated business was established as a document storage business in 1913. Their 105-year evolution is a text book example of “pivoting” at exactly the right time and the right place – long before “pivoting” became an entrepreneurial buzz word. Today, the baton has been passed to fourth generation grandson, Justin Ulman. Ulman seems to have inherited an innate ability of

knowing that 2016 was the right time to “pivot” yet again - engineering a technological solution that would not only revolutionize “document management”, but also serve as an enterprise grade search engine for content and its “lifecycle”

CultureFit had a chance to Interview Justin Ulman, to gain an insider’s perspective of how this family run operation has survived over 100 years. Considering most companies can’t survive 5 years from inception, it was an enlightening opportunity to gain a first-hand perspective of how the company, its products and services, have evolved by leveraging all 3 key succession factors.

A Company with a Rich History and a Champion of Change

Formerly called Federal Record Storage MDMC, RhinoDox has a long rich history as a fourth-generation, family owned business, spanning nearly every major world event of the twenty-first century – capitalizing on the inherent demands of the marketplace, triggered by the industrial revolution. Like any new business, the first challenge is to understand



where there's a gap/customer need in the market, and then to establish a plan to capitalize on that void. Mission accomplished, by first generation Clarence Ullman who recognized businesses across the country were accumulating reams of paper and files used to document everything from customers to operations – with time, the over-flow became a “green shoot” opportunity for a third-party company to pick-up, catalog, and store the documents in a secure location.

Fifteen years later, the senior Ullman also established themselves as a charter agent for Allied Van Lines, a consortium of moving companies formed by Martin Kennelly, the former mayor of Chicago prior to Richard Daley, Sr. Business remained steady until 1969, when Federal Warehouse made it's first acquisition in Danville, IL. and over the ensuing years, purchased seven more moving companies from Dallas, TX to Milwaukee, WI,

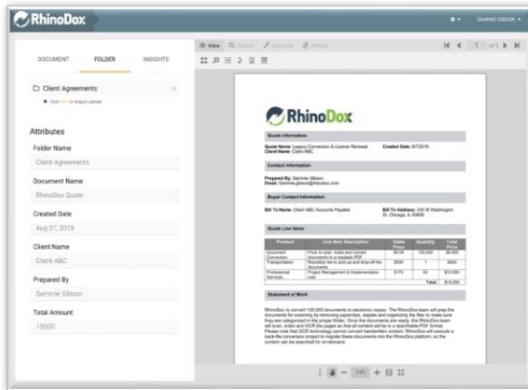
After working with the company for five years, Justin Ulman purchased the record storage location from his father and Aunt in 2009. Three years later, the youngest Ulman made the decision to capitalize on cloud-based solutions. In nearly one swift move he sold the facility and officially changed the name to RhinoDox – a bold but necessary maneuver according to Ullman “to better differentiate themselves in the Chicago document storage market and better reflect the service provided to customers.”

including Elmhurst, IL servicing the Chicago area. During this transition period, the leadership of the company transferred to Jerome Ullman, Clarence's son, to Richard Ullman, the founder's grandson. During the same time, Federal became a more diversified company, entering into the freight business with 48 state authority, expanding the international relocation services to become one of Allied Van Lines International's top volume agents, creating a motorcycle 48 state transportation service, which remains one of the industry leaders, as well as developing a record retention and document services division. The rapid growth of the record retention services was due in part, to the company's proprietary software, which allowed greater flexibility to meet a customer's specific needs. With this growth, the facilities expanded yet again including a modern, state of the art document storage facility in Glendale Heights, IL.



Next Generation Products – From Paper to Cloud

Rising up with the same fortitude of the company's ancestors, 2016 launched their next critical pivot in their evolving products and services – looking at a Customer's documents,



Intelligent Search and Discovery: We've created a Google-like search experience focused on making your life easier. Don't know where that document is? We'll find it because we search within the content of your documents and not just the

Google but customized to meet the unique needs of each of our Customer's businesses. Staying true to our historical tradition, we had to remain focused on putting our customers in control of accessing their information wherever it resides, whenever they want it, to make whatever decisions necessary to accelerate the growth of their business." But this is only half of the solution, Justin further explained, "But beyond just the ability to find information when knowledge workers need it, we started thinking about how that content and information was created. We now have created a flexible engine that looks at how a process is started, what information and documents are generated, who touches it, what decisions are made and how quickly those decisions need to be made. We have the ability to quickly take a process, use the existing technology they already have, and connect them so that processes now have visibility and higher degrees of automation. In 20 years of doing this, it's really pretty exciting."

content, information to automate processes that are business critical, but require manpower that's needed in more valuable areas.

For many companies, this shift would have been enough, but for Justin Ulman he couldn't help but envision an even better solution which closely aligned to their original services mission; an integrated search, retrieval, and storage engine that enables a business to access any system, anywhere, at any time. Justin clarified his vision, "Think of



Workflow & Business Process Automation: We've integrated powerful workflow solutions to transform time consuming processes to streamlined and efficient business operations. Gain process transparency and discover documents and content on-demand.

The Best Solutions Are Never Easy

The conceptual description of RhinoDox's next generation product was the easy part. A few months into development, it became increasingly apparent the engineering of this solution

was going to be an undertaking that has challenged Ullman as well as his most highly skilled developers; however, instead of shelving the project Ulman doubled down and stated "When we

realized this wasn't going to be easy, we were fortunate to have built a team that actually embraces a challenge - we know that when all of the pieces are interconnected we will have solved the

ultimate business problem – a single platform which connects people, processes and technology in a way that will truly disrupt the way businesses operate.

Job Difficulty Converts to High Impact Recruitment Tool & a Unique Culture



The RhinoDox Team

RhinoDox tech team is rich in experience, skills and an intuitive ability to approach most business challenges using a clean whiteboard. Ullman was quick to concede, that although he's identified a reliable formula for hiring his tech team, the approach was lacking a much needed retention component – for this, he's relied upon a point of view he's held fast to throughout his career, "When people quit their jobs, they're actually quitting their bosses, but if you give a developer or programmer a project that challenges and inspires them on a daily basis, they naturally become more tolerant, *of everything.*" It's this baseline approach that's supported Ullman's recruitment and retention strategy – But he also added,

How did a company find the right IT skill sets for a product that didn't exist? It's a common perception, that engineering a solution can only be possible with the right talent, and the right skills. But the skills and experience Justin sought were far from ordinary – he resided himself early in the development process that this solution required behavioral skills such as abstract problem solving, and open minds that could see past customary developer and business rules. Ultimately, the

"Our team has joined the company for the challenge, but they stay because the company also operates on a foundation of exchanging honest opinions, and ideas, without a risk of retribution. It may seem like a philosophy everyone would embrace, but we've all learned to choose our words cautiously, so walking into an environment that removes those barriers, requires people to let go of their past learned behavior." Ultimately, this approach is a big factor in why RhinoDox employees feel valued – the final key factor contributing to the success trilogy which drives 100 plus year legacies.

The evolution of RhinoDox is steeped in a rich history of leadership that has

continued an intuitive sense of when to evolve at exactly the right time, a clear mission of what the team needed to accomplish to deliver on their customer-centric mission, and an environment that

provides the team a sense of valued contribution. We suspect they'll see another 100 years under the guidance of the Ullman family traditions.

About RhinoDox



RhinoDox is a family-owned business, with roots dating all the way back to 1913. The company began as a physical document storage organization, but the RhinoDox we know today was founded in 2016.

After CEO, Justin Ullman, took the company over, his passion for content really shined when he created the company's cloud-based, Intelligent Content Platform.

The RhinoDox platform remains unmatched in the industry in its storage, search and workflow capabilities, and the organization continues to thrive and grow in the Chicago technology space.

About CultureFit



CultureFit Technology Staffing brings experience in all types of economic environments to organizations throughout the Greater Chicagoland and Milwaukee areas. With over 20 years of IT staffing experience, they are well versed to partner with companies in any hiring and staffing situation. Each year, they're charged to recruit, negotiate, and place 100's of open positions with quality talent that meet skill set requirements, as well as compliment an organization's culture. Their unique position has afforded them the opportunity to identify hiring trends from both the organizational and talent's perspective.