

Managed Service Provider for Business Computers, IT Support And Consulting in the Greater Delaware Valley



John Rutkowski
Chief Executive Officer

BOLDER Designs Inc.
www.bolderdesigns.com

Contact:
John Rutkowski
302-731-8480 X 111
jr@bdesigns.com

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

“You cannot just stay in one place and you have to keep learning in order to keep growing in the business. That drive in the business for learning is what keeps us fresh in the marketplace and fresh with clients.” - John Rutkowski

CEOCFO: *What is the concept behind Bolder Designs?*

Mr. Rutkowski: The simplest terms is that we take care of people’s business computers. In industry terms, we are managed service provider and have done that for many years before the term even existed. The simplest concept is when business people contact us, they want us to take care of their computers but we are taking care of all their technology needs. June 1st is the unofficial birthday of BOLDER Designs. It is Thirty years old today.

CEOCFO: *How have you managed to change focus and evolve throughout the years? What is the secret to getting it right?*

Mr. Rutkowski: I have five Rules by which I run my business:

1. Fall on the grenade,
2. The twenty minute rule
3. Stay in touch
4. You must wanting to learn
5. No secrets. Knowledge is fluid and your brain has leaks so you need a way to keep sewing it up.

You cannot just stay in one place and you have to keep learning in order to keep growing in the business. That drive in the business for learning is what keeps us fresh in the marketplace and fresh with clients.

CEOCFO: *Is there a common thread among your customers?*

Mr. Rutkowski: A majority of our clients are professional services people such as architects, engineers, lawyers, commercial real estate etc, people for the most part, selling time for money. We do have clients in a variety of other odd or unusual manufacturing businesses. For example, if you look out on the New York City skyline from a rooftop, you look out and see all those wooden water tanks. Our client Rosenwach Tank makes all those wooden water tanks. It is a 150 year old business. They are also a service business delivering the water infrastructure to their clients.

CEOCFO: *Are most professionals looking for managed services today or still not realizing the need and the advantage?*

Mr. Rutkowski: It is usually an evolution in the maturity and age of any business. When you are small, you do it all yourself. As you grow, you realize things are more complex and you need additional professional services. One of my architectural clients say before he takes on any new job, he talks to three people, he talks to his lawyer, accountant and BOLDER Design. He talks the lawyer to make sure all the paperwork is right. He talks to the accountant to make sure he

has all the money lined up for the project, and he talks to us to make sure he has the right technology in place for the project. As any business grows, you have to rely on brains other than yourselves in order to grow the business. We take care of that technology aspect of where a business is going and what technology it needs to get there.

CEOCFO: *How do you assess both of those factors when businesses do not know how to articulate where they are going? What do you look at understand from your experience that allows you to come up with the best solution for a client?*

Mr. Rutkowski: Our best relationships are when the clients know what they want to do with their own businesses. If they do not have it clear in their head or their own business is chaotic, we cannot always help them with the chaos. If they are working on a big project, we need to drill into how many people, where they are located, what the end result product is, set up drawings documents and physical product. Then we look at what technology they need to have in place to deliver their project. I cannot help the person that says that they are going to be a ten million dollar company next year and we ask how, and they say they do not know. If you do not know what you are selling/delivering as your business, we cannot help you. Burns Engineering has a very clear focus that they say they are infrastructure engineers that design transportation systems, railways, airports, harbors, freights. They have a defined product and market. We are just helping them start a new branch office in Orlando FL. Our best clients are the ones that know where they want to take their own business.

CEOCFO: *How do you help your clients with security?*

Mr. Rutkowski: You need multiple layers to do security. We have put out free training to all the users via an online training course they can take in about thirty minutes that covers the major threats out there in the marketplace these days. We do not take on a client unless we are providing filtering for their emails, spam filtering archiving. We do provide the web content filter firewall to look at where people are going and restrict things that are appropriate for their business and not going to time wasters. Those are all part of our standard package that we do for every client. If a client says they do not need the spam filter, it is not a match for our business offering. We have learned over the years that you are better to turn a client away if they want to have things that do not meet your standards or model.

CEOCFO: *Do you do much on premises service these days?*

Mr. Rutkowski: There is less and less of it done. We do have scheduled monthly meetings usually to go over what business changes they have in place. We do the vast bulk of our work remotely. Sometimes you need to go on-site, but even button pushing, we deploy a lot of remote power controllers that will watch gateways and firewalls, modems that if there is an internet problem and it cannot get out, it resets the equipment automatically. That eliminates a truck roll. It requires an investment on our part to go so that but it makes for a greater client satisfaction.

CEOCFO: *What are the intangibles that make someone right for BOLDER?*

Mr. Rutkowski: In our own hiring process, we start with a fit interview. Does the person look like they have a fit within the organization? If I give them the five rules of BOLDER Design by which we run the company, can they understand them? The fit process is number one because you can medicate crazy, you can train for ignorance, but you cannot fix stupid.

CEOCFO: *How is business these days?*

Mr. Rutkowski: Business has been good. Some of my attention has been drawn into a larger organization that we are developing called The 20, which is a peer group of about seventy other managed service providers. We all use the same common model for sales and service delivery. A lot of my energy has gone into growing that organization that is run by Tim Conkle and myself. Everyone uses the same common infrastructure rather than each one of us reinventing the wheel. In the service delivery and business process and procedures, we are doing it centrally as a group. We have our own common help desk in Dallas Texas, our own cloud solutions with US Signal in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area. I am trying to run two businesses at the same time. BOLDER Designs could be larger in sales, but I have been looking at developing The 20.

CEOCFO: *Why is this a good time for the new concept?*

Mr. Rutkowski: There is change in consolidation in the managed service provider. In the early days of being a computer consultant, all you needed was a screwdriver and a set of floppy discs, but the cost of infrastructure to do it right is significantly higher these days. I think I started the business with twenty thousand dollars to get going, but these days of building this from scratch, it is a minimum investment in just hardware and software, not talking about people but infrastructure of about 150,000 dollars. Having a model that people can plug into of getting the best practices together, that allows all of our businesses to grow via that common shared infrastructure.

CEOCFO: Do people most appreciate the history of BOLDER Designs?

Mr. Rukowski: Nobody knows the struggles, the time or the care that has gone into keeping people running and business. If you achieve less than 100% perfection, people are not happy, but no system is perfect. People are not perfect; systems are not perfect. Nobody says when you do a great job, because when you do a great job, everything is invisible. We see it internally and sometimes you beat yourself up internally and say this or that could be better. I would say it is one of those thankless jobs in some regards. The only people that appreciate it sometimes are your peers. I captain a group of about twelve other MSPs. We have a weekly call to discuss business and marketing and other topics. That all helps grow the business and that is why I am looking at growing The 20, because I have much more appreciative clients. The MSP acknowledge the work and the effort that has gone in to make a better system.

CEOCFO: BOLDER Design was recognized on the MSPMentor 501 list. Why was that important for you?

Mr. Rukowski: Because it's a measuring stick by which you can compare and contrast your business with other technology providers. It's an independent body that says we are one of the BEST Managed Service Providers in the country. And we had to prove it with our financials and business practices. We have made the smaller MSP Mentor SMB100 list. But this year we are running with the big dogs in the industry. I'm very proud that we made the Top 501 list.

CEOCFO: Why choose BOLDER Designs and why pay attention to The 20?

Mr. Rukowski: I would point to my video on the website of WHY we are in business. We are in business because we love those smooth running machines that do the work that businesses need to have done. The Why of BOLDER Designs? Why is because we love solving problems. The brown Santa Claus comes every new day bringing us new toys, which is when the UPS driver shows up. You have to love solving problems. If you do not like that, you cannot fit in the business. For The 20, if you are dedicated to growth and looking for a better model, Tim's business is a twelve million dollar MSP business. He has been super successful in the Google Ad Words. We have a model that works and we can expand it. It is not based on someone's personality; it is based on Why the model works. It is a good business decision for our clients and a good business decision for the other MSPs to work in the model.

