

MSP SUCCESS

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CEO Rene Miller And President Michele Miller Of Ener Systems, LLC

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ENER SYSTEMS
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

HOW THIS HUSBAND-AND- WIFE'S "NO" TURNED INTO NEW ORLEANS' TOP TECHNOLOGY FIRM

"When we weren't getting the technical support we needed back in our days in automation, we learned how to do it ourselves."

What would make Rene and Michele Miller, co-founders of Ener Systems, LLC, leave their successful careers in the automotive industry as mechanical engineers solving productivity issues with cool, computerized robots to start their own IT business?

"I always knew I couldn't work for someone long-term because I had a knack for speaking my mind," Rene says. "And one Thanksgiving night, that's where I found myself."

At the time, Rene was working remotely; he drove 200 miles from Mississippi, back to his home in New Orleans, to spend the holiday with his family. Thanksgiving night, Rene's boss called and told him that manufacturing hadn't made its quota and he would have to return to work the very next morning.

"I'd been working 14 to 16-hour days and, at that moment, all I could picture was my boss sleeping late Friday morning, having a leisurely brunch of Thanksgiving leftovers with family, then rolling up late for work in his Mercedes S 500. Then and there, I made up my mind: I wanted the same personal and financial freedom as this guy. As undiplomatically as possible, I said to him, no, I don't."

Prior to that Thanksgiving, Rene and Michele, who both worked for this same manufacturer, had developed an entrepreneurial itch. They knew they wanted to run a business, but they weren't sure what type. Some "unplanned work" soon revealed their answer.

At a time when technology was still in its infancy, the company the Millers worked for lacked technicians with the skill and expertise needed to help set up and maintain computer and network systems that would make automation and assembly lines talk to each other. So, that left Rene and Michele "figuring it out for ourselves."

"Back in the day, there was no one we could ask for help," Michele says. "There was no Internet to speak of, or online forums. We had to roll up our sleeves and learn as we went."

However, this unplanned IT work that forced them out of their lane and took up their time and energy was something they were quite good at.

That was the itch Michele was ready to scratch: helping businesses use IT to make operations more efficient and profitable, but without having to manage it, and helping others get rid of unplanned work.

So, in 1997, Michele moved back to their hometown of New Orleans to start the new business – leaving Rene in Mississippi, with his full-time job that provided a financial safety net, while she got business off the ground. Until that infamous Thanksgiving showdown.

Michele was still building her business, and the income wasn't yet enough to sustain them – not to mention, they were raising a growing family.

"I knew if I continued working full-time, that would give Michele and me time to grow the business, build wealth and take care of our family," Rene says. That's when he found a job back in New Orleans and was able to help with clients during the evenings.

The Millers' willingness to tough it out was worth the wait. In 2007, Rene officially joined Michele, his partner in life, as her partner in business. Today, Ener Systems is a thriving IT technology solutions provider and "go-to" source for small businesses, from all verticals, in the Greater New Orleans and North Shore area.

Giving Small Businesses Back Their Time

Rene and Michele first became IT experts out of necessity. Now it's their passion.

Though the work has changed, the approach from their mechanical engineering roots has not: utilizing technology to eliminate unproductive, unnecessary and unplanned work.

"Our jobs back then were to make production easier for the company we worked for so they could make better, more cost-effective widgets," says Rene. "With Ener Systems, we wanted to make that same type of efficiency available and affordable to small business owners. We're doing the same thing, just with digital widgets these days."

Ener Systems helps businesses not just use technology, but leverage it to help move them forward, without trying to "figure things out" on their own – they do it for them.

"I spent my childhood trying to make things work better," says Rene. "Taking something and trying to improve it so it required less interaction, less effort to do what it was supposed to. That's why we're here for small businesses."

A Great Coach Is A Game Changer

Growing a successful business from scratch, the Millers can personally relate to challenges company owners deal with every day – trying to improve efficiencies, increase bottom line and manage people resources. Having a technology partner that understands the mechanics of business is vital.

Besides doing everything IT, where Ener Systems adds value is in coaching: helping owners think bigger than the technology. Their business mentor, David Garland, inspired the Millers to share lessons they learned and best practices – "from interacting with clients to increasing sales to leading employees" – with their clients.

"I realized we had an opportunity to deliver more than a spectrum of first-class, reliable IT services. We could help them think in the space of strategic outcomes and goals," says Michele.

That means using IT solutions for more than just advancing clients' businesses – it means advancing their people. A key objective to improving productivity inefficiencies isn't about reducing people, it's about optimizing their time.

"It's always been our mission to help clients eliminate their unplanned work. We know how passionate IT professionals get about technology, and how unmoved they become when they get bogged down with routine, uninspiring tasks," Rene says. "That's why we do everything in our power to provide services that keep their people focused on what they do best, so they never have to worry about keeping their team fed intellectually; this results in a more successful business."

The Who And The Why Behind Ener Systems

The Millers founded their business specifically to make the lives of SMB owners – "with an emphasis on the small" – easier and more productive. Their clients range from com-

panies with six employees to companies with 500, with no specific vertical niche.

What Ener Systems' clients have in common is twofold: they value their people's time, and the owners are local.

"A business can have locations globally or nationally, but if the owner isn't local, that business doesn't fit our model well," says Michele. "Mentoring is such a big part of what we do at Ener Systems, it's imperative to have that owner-to-owner connection. This is where we really excel in the competitive landscape."

High-Quality IT Services Bring Recognition And Accolades

The exceptional growth of Ener Systems over the past 20+ years, and Rene and Michele's recognition as industry superstars, means well-deserved awards and accolades for the dynamic duo.

Ener Systems has received Channel Futures MSP Mentor Awards for the past six years, and Michele has been named to the Women of the Channel, an elite group of influential women in IT, an extraordinary 10 times.

"We're also certified as a woman-owned business, which our clients appreciate and value," says Rene. "Michele is the brain and the brawn that first started this entrepreneurial adventure."

Uniquely, Rene is the only Certified Information Systems Security Professional – CISSP – business owner in the New Orleans market. Acquiring the world's premier cyber security certification ensures that best-in-class cyber security programs, global industry standards and best practices in information security are met.

Rene's commitment to excellence and 12 industry certifications and partnerships provide a different perspective to their clients.

Both Michele and Rene are licensed professional engineers, which sets them apart in the industry. "Our commitment to education, and a desire to constantly be learning, which is one of our core values, has played a tremendous role in the success of our business," Rene says.

Additionally, Rene and Michele co-authored the publication "The Secret To Hassle-Free Computer Support Or How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love My Computer!"

Looking back at their success, Michele says, "It's all about finding what you are meant to do. No matter how or when that 'aha' moment happens, embrace it. When we weren't getting the technical support we needed back in our days in automation, we learned how to do it ourselves. And then other departments started coming to us for guidance. We found that we were just naturally good at helping people solve problems." Not only are they good at it, but it's their passion.

For more information on Ener Systems, LLC, visit www.enersystems.com. ■



CEO Rene Miller And President Michele Miller
Of Ener Systems, LLC