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UBJ PROFILE

The names behind the Upstate's growth and success

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WE
CREATE
IN ORDER
TO HELP
HUMANS
FLOURISH.

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MEET OUR TEAM

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The Boss: Pamela Evette

YESTERDAY

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AGE 48

TITLE: President and CEO, Quality Business Solutions

HOMETOWN: Middleburg Heights, Ohio

EDUCATION: Studied at The Ohio State University and earned a Bachelor's in Business Administration (BBA) from Cleveland State University in 1989.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

St. Francis Foundation, Prince of Peace, Loves & Fishes, Breast Cancer Relay for Life, and Pendleton Place. Quality Business Solutions provides internships and supports the Greenville Drive, the Greenville Swamp Rabbits and the Peace Center

FAMILY: Husband, David; children, Amanda, Joey and Jackson

Pamela Evette and her husband, David, launched Quality Business Solutions in 2000, carving out an acre of David's family land in Travelers Rest to build an office up the hill from their home. Today they are competing with the big dogs in their industry, and though they have had to expand their office space as the QBS team has grown, the base of operations remains there in the corner of the horse pasture.

The Quality Business Solutions staff totals 33 full- and part-time employees. This small but mighty team processes payroll for clients


in 48 states. The largest client has roughly 48,000 employees. The company has experienced revenue growth of nearly \$300 million over the past three years, making it a nearly \$1 billion enterprise.

The Boss // 2016 Who's Who




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A Twitter list by @UpstateBiz

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@hincapiesports

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Strive to make your day great, that's the #hincapieaway



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Talk about your decision to launch your business in Travelers Rest. Why have you chosen to stay there as you've grown?

All this property started out as my husband's grandfather's, so we built our house here. It started out as just a good financial decision to build something here on our property. But then, TR has just grown – people love TR.

We really like what's happening in the city, we like that it's quaint, we like that we're not battling people on Woodruff Road. Last year when we had to make a decision to expand our building again or find another building, our employees said, "We don't want to go." They really like it here. And a lot of them have moved and centered in this way.

We just think it's a cool place, and we're really happy to be here and growing with it.

How have you been able to turn the amount of business you do with such a small team?

Really, it's technology. It's staying ahead of the curve technology-wise. When I first got out of college and I was doing accounting, you had a 10-key and green bar. You weren't doing anything in Excel. I can remember those huge audit bags that you'd carry around with five years of green bar paper and audits. And now everything is automated.

Probably eight years ago we made a conscious decision to really invest in

technology, to have really great security on our systems. Even when we started 16 years ago, our clients would fax in their time sheets and our people would key them. Our largest client is 48,000 employees. We would have needed 10 people just to manage it. Now you're importing data. Nobody's hand-keying. What would have taken you weeks, takes you 10 minutes.

We have given our employees all the technology we can to make sure their job is easy, and we've been able to grow exponentially without having to add a ton of staff. We still have room for a lot of growth before we have to put a lot more bodies in the office.

It's technology – not just in our industry but in every industry – that has really made you be able to shoot your revenue numbers out without employing a ton of people.



“A great boss has the *vision and resources to continually grow and improve* his or her organization. At Cherry Bekaert, our firm is dedicated to providing guidance to help our clients grow and *optimize innovation*. That is why Cherry Bekaert is honored to recognize Pam as a leader, go-getter and all-around great boss.”

Mark Cooter, Managing Partner, Cherry Bekaert



How have you not been eaten by one of your larger competitors?

We do get offers all the time from people that say, “Hey, we’ve been watching you.” I laugh. We have a third-grader, so for me to sell... I don’t know what else I would want to do. I still like what I do. It’s a challenge. I like being out there, I like to talk to people.

Our focus is customer service. And I have heard that cry from all of the clients we’ve taken over from our larger competitors: “I don’t want to call an 800 number.” “I don’t know who I talk to on a daily basis.” “I’m so tired of them saying, ‘I’m sorry, we can’t accommodate.’”

As we’ve grown we have always grown with the ideal that we are never going to have this cookie-cutter, “if you’re a square peg we’re going to make you fit in our round hole or we’re not going to do business with you” [mindset]. We have always been very conscious of that and made sure our people know that, too. At the end of the day, customer service is what separates us from everybody.

I don’t know that the way we want to operate for our clients will ever be like [our larger competitors] – this big huge cruise ship that you can’t turn or steer or take in any direction but straight. I just know that our clients have left all those places because they’re tired of bad service, so that’s what we really focus on: giving great service to our clients.

I’d love to keep growing; I’m not afraid of growing. I just always want to make sure that as we grow we keep those core things in line. I think we would do ourselves and our company a disservice if we ever try to go away from that, because it really has got us to where we are today.

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I’m not afraid of growing.
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things in line.”

How can the Upstate take advantage of what

you have to offer?

I have my business give back to things that I feel are really great charities. I love anything kid-related. Kids and old people. I think those are the two most vulnerable groups. When I go to Pendleton Place and hear those stories, that just breaks my heart, to see them in these situations they didn't ask to be a part of.

And older people, who have this great wealth of knowledge and insight. We have a lot of retired people who work for us part-time. I love hiring retired people if they want to come work. I love bringing them back.

These days older people and young people don't really mix, and I think that's such a loss. I always thought one day when I had a ton of time, if I could somehow meld kids that have issues and older people that have a ton to give and nobody to give it to, it would be a phenomenal business investment. I don't know how I would do it and I know right now I don't have the time to try, but if I had time and resources that would be something I could put 100 percent behind.

What's your idea of work/life balance?

I've always tried to show my kids that nothing comes easy – everything you want you have to work hard for. I don't think I've tried to downplay how hard it is to run a business and be successful.

I recently missed a local business event because my son had a lacrosse game and he was starting. I would have loved to have been there and seen everybody, but he's only going to be in high school another year. I have a million opportunities to network and meet people, and I only have a few opportunities to watch him play lacrosse.

That's the balance I look for. I just don't want my kids to ever think work was more important than they were. And in my heart I think I've achieved that.



What is your proudest business achievement?

When I reached the Inc. Impact 50. I never realized where I fell in that line. And then we found out I was number 3 [among the Top 50 Women Entrepreneurs in America]. You just don't know where you're ranked, but it was just like, wow. And then 2016 brought Enterprising Women of Year.

I grew up with three older brothers, and so being a girl never seemed like a hindrance to me. I never got in a situation – even when I was in public accounting – where I felt uneasy or uncomfortable because it was all men. If it got uneasy I always tried to make a joke. And I never felt intimidated by men because I grew up around boys.

But then as I got involved with more women stuff I realized there was a whole different world out there, where women did feel intimidated. If some of those accolades help one girl my daughter's age, or help my daughter to think there's no reason you can't be anything you want to be, that's a really proud moment. If it helps just one girl take a leap, I think that's huge.



How do you celebrate success?

We celebrate as a company. We try to not run as a hierarchy, we run as a team. I use this example all the time: I can be out here getting our name recognized, and David can be selling to great companies, payroll people can be doing everything they need to do, and then we have some part-timers and interns in our distribution room. If you look at a hierarchical chart, those people would be on the bottom of your graph. But if they put a check in a wrong envelope and it doesn't get where it's going, we all look bad.

There is not one job in this building that really is more or less important than another job. We all sink or swim as a team. So when we get these [accolades] I try to celebrate them at work and say, "You guys are all part of this, too." If our philosophy is sink or swim together, then anything I achieve, they achieve, too.

How do you motivate?

We hire very self-motivated people. I always tell whoever is doing the interviewing to be honest with people. Not everybody can work independently – it's a style, it's the way you're hard-wired. But you have to be honest with people because you don't want to set them up to fail.

I really haven't had to a lot to motivate [our staff]. They have a lot of personal pride in what they do. That's probably why we've been so successful.



one year of transformation

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