

Richter Total Office, Souderton, Pennsylvania

2020 has been about moving forward, maximising opportunities and making yourself as indispensable as possible—all in an effort to not only survive, but thrive during and, of course, after the pandemic.

This is certainly what Richter Total Office has done. And if that name sounds a little unfamiliar, it's because the family-owned and run dealer—formerly known as Richter Drafting & Office Supply Co, Inc—very recently and impressively underwent a major rebrand in the middle of COVID-19.

Vice president Andy Richter, son of company founder and president Al Richter, explains: "Our name was becoming limiting for the company we had become. For customers that knew us, it wasn't a barrier. But for new prospects, I felt we were missing opportunities because, following a simple search for, say, 'furniture,' we wouldn't immediately be identified as an expert in this area. Also, 'Richter Drafting & Office Supply Company Incorporated' is a bit of a mouthful—we were looking for something more concise and marketable.

"When looking for a new name, we had a lot of ideas and we knew for sure that 'Richter' had to be in it. 'Richter Total Office' accomplishes everything, we felt. 'Richter' is our identity and heritage; 'Office' describes the B2B customers we serve; and 'Total' brings it all together—because we do everything."

Indeed, Richter has irons in many fires. The Souderton, Pennsylvania-based dealer has been growing its top line steadily over the past six years by 5 to 10 percent. As at so many other dealerships, the jan/san segment has seen a considerable uptick during the crisis.

But as the pre-rebrand name suggests, Richter's origins lie elsewhere. The company started

out as a blueprinting and drafting supply company when it was founded by Al Richter in 1985, before expanding into office supplies in 1987, followed by furniture, jan/san and, most recently, mobile shredding. That said, reprographics remains important: the company was recently recognized as one of the top 40 Canon imagePROGRAF dealers in the country by sales. It's also the region's largest stocking dealer of wide format media.

Furniture is another vital part of the mix and—outside the pandemic—has been its biggest growth category. Here too, the firm has been expanding its product and geographic reach through onboarding new vendors and offering services such as furniture relocation and deconstruction. In a nod to the importance of this segment, and as part of its rebrand, the dealer has in fact created a separate division called Richter Office Interiors.

The final component under the broad company umbrella is Richter Mobile Shredding, an entity born out of the creation of its mobile shredding business in 2007. The business was set up due to customer demand, explains Richter, and the big capital investment it required at the time has since paid off very nicely.

Positioning itself as a local—and mostly stockless—player with a strong regional and, on many levels, national reach required the right partners. S.P. Richards (SPR) is one of them and Richter can't sing its praises highly enough: "We have been an SPR customer for a very long time and they're a great partner for us. That's how I see it—a partnership. Their support in the areas of logistics, digital marketing resources, access to category experts etc is invaluable to us. Very importantly also, thanks to their scale, we are able to 'act' bigger than we actually are, giving us the ability to service

Year founded: 1985

Key management team: Al Richter (founder/owner/president); Andy Richter (vice-president); Kim Richter (treasurer); Sheila Doerr (office manager); Brian Kelly (warehouse supervisor)

Products carried: Office supplies; office furniture; janitorial and breakroom supplies; plotters and engineering copiers; mobile document shredding; drones; promotional products; printing

Key business partners: S.P. Richards, ISG, Reprographic Services Association

Employees: 20

Percent of sales from online: 50%-60%

URLs: www.richteronline.com, www.richtermobileshredding.com, www.richterofficeinteriors.com (being built)

large accounts, have polished and resource-rich e-content, and service customers accurately and efficiently."

Customer service, in its most comprehensive form, is certainly the dealer's hallmark, he adds: "We strive for genuine relationship-building. Not just good customer service—anyone can do that. Our new slogan is, 'We work for you.' I want us to be so integrated in our customers' workflows that they essentially view us as employees. When they place an order and our drivers show up, we don't need to ask where to put the product; we know exactly what to do. We'll do their inventory, so they don't have to worry about running out of anything. And we'll run usage reports each month so they don't have to track their invoices.

"Tell us what you need, even if it seems extravagant or just plain weird, and we'll do everything we can to get it done."

