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1stLink

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1stel is Celebrating Our 10th Anniversary!

We want to express our appreciation to all of our loyal customers for allowing us to serve you since 1999!

Our goal at 1stel is to earn your business everyday by giving you personal attention and outstanding service.

Thanks again for 10 great years!

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Customer Spotlight: Ben Allen, Cendera Funding

At 1stel, we view ourselves as a business partner to each of our customers in helping you to build a strong, efficient business. As you can imagine, we get to work with some impressive Entrepreneurs! In each edition of 1stLink, we are excited to share with you a brief interview with one of our Customers. Please enjoy reading our Customer Spotlight!

Q: What types of products or services does Cendera Funding provide?

A: We are a fully Licensed Texas Mortgage Banker that offers an array of residential and commercial lending options.

Q: What would you like people to know about Cendera Funding?

A: We treat every client like they are a member of our family. We strive to make their mortgage experience as smooth and enjoyable as possible.

Q: What sets you apart from your competition?

A: Our level of service is unmatched. We work everyday to be leaders in our industry, and we very proud of that.

Q: Do you have any current milestones?

A: We are on pace to double our production numbers from last year. I see that as a true testament of our commitment to our clients and referral partners.

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Q: Do you have any awards/recognition given to you from an outside source from 2007 or 2008?

A: We have been awarded the “Cendera Cup” for the last two years. This award recognizes the top branch in the Cendera family. It focuses on customer satisfaction and overall production.

Q: How long have you been in business?

A: We have operated in Cleburne for five wonderful years, but I have personally been in the mortgage industry for thirteen years now.

Q: How long have you been a customer of 1stel?

A: I have been a loyal 1stel client the entire time I have been in business in Cleburne.

Important Information About Your Account!

We strive to provide you with the best telephone and Internet service possible. One way we are doing this is by providing the best security possible for your account. As of October 1, 2008, we have started requiring an authorization code before we can assist you with your account. Each contact person in your company will have a unique authorization code. To set up your authorization code(s), your online account manager can login to your account at www.1stel.com and go into the contact section. If you need assistance with your login, please call (800) 300-2031.

Who’s Who @ 1stel: Deborah Gendke

As a part of customer service and provisioning, Deborah Gendke works closely with 1stel customers to make sure their service needs are taken care of. When service for a new customer is ready to be installed, Deborah calls to setup a time that works for them and answer any questions they may have. When a customer has any questions regarding their contract or service, she works to get answers for them. “The best part about my work here at 1stel is the time I get to work with our customers,” says Deborah. “I enjoy the opportunity to help them where I can.”

Deborah has been married for 14 years and has two daughters, ages 11 and 13. Away from work she enjoys reading, working with her church youth group and NASCAR.

Product Preview: Unified Messaging (Fax to Email)

Every day important documentation is sent and received at your company using a fax machine. The messages received may range from a basic update of contact information to proprietary information only to be seen by a certain employee. What is your standard procedure for proprietary information received via fax? Do all of the employees share a fax machine? Have you been receiving a lot of random fax advertisements?

Unified messaging will help address some of these questions and concerns. Unified messaging receives any incoming faxes, converts the fax into a PDF and emails it to the designated employee. "I think it's very convenient to use," said Francie Young, Loan Officer from Texas People Federal Credit Union.

The benefits of having faxed information sent to email:

- Increase privacy
- Eliminate worries of a busy signal
- Save money on fax machine supplies
- Save money on fax maintenance
- Save on time

There are still companies that will accept information being faxed to them. If that information is confidential, unified messaging eliminates the chance for additional people seeing the message. "We have a lot of loan deals sent by fax, said Francie Young. "We don't have to worry about someone else taking them off the fax machine." It also ensures the message is delivered to the correct person in a timely manner.

By converting fax messages into emails you eliminate the concern of senders receiving a busy signal. That little feature allows for multiple people to send messages at the same time and for messages to still get to the email when there is a power outage.

With the squeeze of the economy, everyone is trying to find ways to save money. Having unified messaging will reduce the use of paper and toner. If you are using the fax machine less then it will take longer for it to need any maintenance. It also allows for a dedicated fax line to be used as a normal phone line when people are not sending faxes out.

Call us today to see if unified messaging can provide additional function or efficiency to your business!

Business Corner: *Building Employee Morale in Your Small Business*

Building good employee morale is one of the most important keys to running a successful small business, and it starts with the recognition that your workers are one of your biggest assets. Aside from productivity, your employees can be a source of innovation and a positive customer experience that will lead to increased sales. Knowing how to bring the best out of your employees will therefore not only make your business a more enjoyable place to be, but it will also affect your bottom line.

The following are 5 tips to building employee morale in your small business:

- **Communication:** There are several aspects to communication with your employees: initiating dialog, encouraging your employees to speak, and listening to what they have to say. Your workers will appreciate your openness if things need to change, such as the introduction of new equipment or a change in their work patterns, and they will further appreciate being able to voice their concerns or offer helpful suggestions that you may not have thought of.
- **Response:** But it is not just good enough to hear what your employees are saying, you also need to respond to it. Whether an employee brings a complaint or a cost-saving suggestion, regardless of the actual action you end up taking as a result, you should try to get

back to your employee about the issue. The more validated and understood your employees feel, the more change they will be able to withstand and the more helpful tips they will be able to offer.

- **Recognition:** You will also go a long way with your employees by recognizing their efforts. Just keep in mind, that what ever recognition and reward system you set up, make sure that it is not just focused on the outstanding performers. Some of your employees may never be outstanding, even if they technically do a good job. So make sure to also focus on the average players.
- **Involvement:** Getting employees involved in some of the big business decisions, especially the ones that will directly effect them, is another good way to build employee morale. You could for example, set up a small committee among the workers to come up with ways to increase efficiency or sales.
- **Advancement:** Make sure you have a set plan for employee advancement. This plan should include steps to increased responsibility, higher paying jobs within the business, and a raise schedule.

Customer Stories

"1stel has been such a help for my business. They have provided me with several services that were not available from our previous phone company. Also, they are providing me more service for the same amount of money. Better yet, now I have faster internet service, web-hosting, e-mail accounts, more lines and I get to deal with nice people right here in my local community. This is the most pleased I have ever been with any phone company and hope to stay with them forever!"

--Herman Gatewood, Jr; Gatewood Electric