

COSE
COUNCIL OF SMALLER ENTERPRISES

TEN

UNDER

10

AWARDS

2005

Clear as a Bell

Service is the secret to GTS Communications' rapid growth

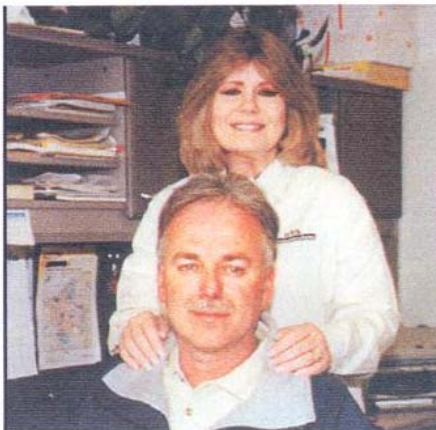
To call Jerry Stallard a self-taught entrepreneur is an understatement.

After retiring from the U.S. Coast Guard in 1994, Stallard bought an office phone system and spent nights in his mother's Olmsted Township barn figuring out how to network it. He became an expert.

"I was out there until 2 a.m. most nights," Stallard says. Being in the Coast Guard taught me to be disciplined, so I never quit."

Armed with a pickup truck, a ladder and some basic tools, Stallard launched GTS Communications — a phone system and cabling installation and service company — out of his one-bedroom apartment in Berea.

One of his first clients was a staffing firm. While installing their phone system, Stallard met Victoria, who in 1998 would become his wife and business partner.



Jerry Stallard, left, and his wife, Victoria, found that great customer service is the key for their business, GTS Communications.

"Being in the Coast Guard taught me to be disciplined, so I never quit."

-Jerry Stallard

"Vicki brought more of the customer service side to my business," Stallard says. "It was a perfect fit."

From Stallard's apartment, GTS grew into the Stallards' home in Columbia Station before 2000 when they opened a 1,000-square-foot storefront office in North Olmsted. Plans are now under way for a 5,500-square-foot free-standing headquarters.

Stallard has six full-time technicians and three full-time office staff, and has had zero turnover in staff in nine years, a rarity for a small business.

He's managed to grow his business by at least 25 percent a year by fostering a loyal customer base, and excellent word-of-mouth referrals.

"We're in the communication business, so we communicate a lot with our customers," Victoria Stallard says. "Not everyone is used to that level of service."

— Morgan Lewis Jr.

GTS Communications

The COSE Ten Under 10 is a new annual small business awards program that recognizes the outstanding achievements of ten northeast Ohio organizations with ten or fewer full-time employees. Winners are COSE members selected for their best practices in innovation, growth/success, value to the community and environment, diversity promotion and customer service excellence.