

Intermodal Support Services Inc.

ISS *Intermodal Support Services*



Family values in the freight world

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Intermodal Support Services, Inc: **Family values in the *freight* world**

VP Jenny Johnson says this multi-faceted company's small size allows it to focus on and become personally invested in each of its customers

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Produced by Michael Magno

In a world of big players, Intermodal Support Services, Inc. is proud to be a small company. Vice President of Operations Jenny Johnson says they like to think of themselves as "a boutique provider. We don't want to be the largest; we want to stay the size we are. We are proud that the owners of the company are easily accessible to our customers. Our size makes it possible to personally invest and really care."

Founded in 2000, ISS is an equipment management services company based in Jacksonville, FL, with regional offices in Chicago and Los Angeles. Operating both ISS and TransRail Solutions, Inc., a rail-based division, ISS offers services such as pre-lease inspections of equipment, inspector and gate personnel training, and maintenance and repair management. TransRail also offers clerical and administrative outsourcing services. They currently employ around 150 people and operate



ISS protects rail-road companies' interests



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A family affair

Despite their cross-country scope, ISS is truly a family business, started by Jenny's parents. Her mother, Pamela Johnson, is the CEO, her father, Marv Johnson, is the COO, and her brother Jeremy is the Equipment and Safety Director. The company is also a certified woman-owned business recognized by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) as a Diversified Business Enterprise (DBE).

While some might find working with their entire family unbearable, Jenny Johnson says it makes the business stronger.

"At times it's very frustrating, but we can get a lot more done. There are no office politics and office hours are often extended to discussions over dinner," she says. Working together motivates them to keep the business up and running. "If we go out of business, it's not like I can go

ask my dad for money," she says, laughing.

Born into the industry

In fact, Jenny has been part of the industry since she was a little girl. "I began attending the Atlanta Intermodal Expo meetings as a kid. When I was 8 or 10 years old, I was handing out pens at my dad's booth."

After graduating from the University of Georgia, Johnson stayed in the area and obtained her first job at Norfolk Southern Railroad in Intermodal Operations. During the internet boom of the late 1990s, she moved to an internet banking company, before finally deciding to move to Florida and join the family business.

She began working with ISS in 2002, and along with her mother launched TransRail Solutions, a branch of ISS that focuses on intermodal outsourcing services and most recently rail terminal operations. Johnson describes ISS as being similar to an insurance company in that they do not do repairs themselves. Rather,



Vice President
of Operations,
Jenny Johnson



ISS operates
from California to
Massachusetts



The company
provides gate
inspection
training

they protect the railroad's interests by making sure they are not being overcharged or billed for unneeded repairs.

According to Johnson, many of the railroads were experiencing increased maintenance and repair expenses. ISS put its inspection processes in place and immediately made quantifiable decreases in those expenses. Johnson says, "Since ISS was founded, we have saved our customers millions of dollars."

ISS is both reactive and proactive. They inspect equipment after it's damaged and before it's even taken out.

In 2008, Johnson began a three-year term on the IANA board of directors, in the supplier division. "I really enjoy it. I'm not the first woman, but I'm currently the only woman and the youngest person on the board," she proudly says. Johnson is grateful that she is

"able to give back to the industry I love. It's really rewarding."

Trends in a falling economy

Like much of the current economy, the freight industry is struggling. ISS is having to cut back just like everyone else. "As a family business the worst thing you can possibly do is anything you feel will not be a benefit to your employees. It's kind of heartbreaking. I hope it doesn't get much worse," says Johnson.

Employees are essential to ISS because they are a service-based company. The Johnson family often travels to visit its other locations. Most of their 150 employees are in Chicago and on the West Coast near the rail hubs. Johnson points out that some of them have been with the company for quite a while.

Despite the falling economy, the company

does have plans for expansion, mainly in TransRail. Johnson mentions some exciting plans are in the works for training programs and equipment inspection, but will not reveal more, saying, "We don't want to tip our hand."

In addition, newly issued government safety standards requiring more inspections in the rail-yards are opening up a new market for ISS. With everyone in the industry hoping to win these new jobs, ISS must move quickly to establish a presence. The company has a strategy for obtaining some of this new market but, once again, Johnson does not want to reveal too much.

With these expansion options, ISS and TransRail hope to remain firm during the coming year. Their goal is to "stay strong, stay solid so we can continue to provide jobs for our employees and quality service to our customers," says Johnson. "If we grow, that's gravy." ■

FACTS AT A GLANCE

COMPANY NAME: Intermodal Support Services, Inc.

CEO: Pamela Johnson

OPERATIONS: Intermodal Equipment Management

ESTABLISHED: 2000

REVENUE: \$11 Million

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