Date: 12.19.24

Name: Stephanie Amadio

Stage: Closed Lost

Company Size: Emerging

Number of Techs: 5

Job Title / Level: Director of Finance

Speaker 1: Hi, Stephanie.

Speaker 2: Hi, how are you?

Speaker 3: Very good. How are you doing?

Speaker 2: I'm good now. Are you Drew or are you someone else?

Speaker 3: I'm actually Nick. I'm still competing for Drew today.

Speaker 2: Well, I thought I saw that, but then Drew is listed on the screen, so I was like, it wasn't going to be Drew. Yes. Okay. Alright. I guess the Zoom is assigned to him. Got it. All

Speaker 3: Right. Yes, absolutely. Well, thanks for taking some time today. I appreciate it.

Speaker 2: Yeah, sure. Do you need my camera on? I'm almost embarrassed, but I'll turn my camera on if that helps in your, does it?

Speaker 3: No, whatever you're most comfortable with.

Speaker 2: Okay, then I'll leave it down. Yeah, I work from home. I work from home and so yeah, I haven't made my round yet to the shower, so still my workout. Get up.

Speaker 3: Yeah, I'm with you. Well, great. Well, I appreciate your time. I just want to give you a little briefing here. So the purpose of today's interview is to help us learn more about your experience with service trade

Speaker 1: And

Speaker 3: With your permission we'll be recording the conversation. And just so you know the recording along with the transcript of the interview, we're going to use it to create a report that will be shared with our client, which is service trade, and all of the materials, the recording, the transcript, the report will be shared with service trade really to help them gain insights from customers or potential customers like yourself. Any questions?

Speaker 2: No.

Speaker 3: Okay, awesome.

Speaker 2: No, what I read it is just I'm interested, I haven't done something like this, but I guess it's assessing their success rate, I suppose, is what your firm is doing for them.

Speaker 3: That's right, yes. It's in the context of market research to get them greater insights in terms of how they can better serve customers.

Speaker 1: Okay, great.

Speaker 3: Awesome. So my understanding is that you recently evaluated service trade and decided to not proceed with the service. Is that correct?

Speaker 2: That is correct, yes.

Speaker 3: Okay, great. So let's start by just briefly, if you can introduce yourself and tell me a little bit about SW services.

Speaker 2: Okay, Stephanie Mario, I am the, I guess director of finance for SW services. And we're a small family owned business. We service the electromechanical world, both at commercial industry facilities as well as municipalities. So electromechanical means we sell and repair motors and pumps and anything else that might be electrical or mechanical. We're 12, 13 employees and we have been in business since 96. We are growing and to date, we process a lot of our, what we call jobs, work orders, those terms. We process that a lot on paper and we utilize QuickBooks. We are QuickBooks online really as our main software system for both financially as well as for operations. And we were interested in service trade or something similar to service trade or a software system to get our operations piece out of QuickBooks, so to speak, and help us with documentation of processes where every technician has consistency, one amongst the other with whatever type of equipment they're working, something that would capture the documentation of what was done to assess what was done to repair, what was done, to test any type of work that we're doing.

Speaker 2: And anyway, so yeah, get that. And even what we were doing was kind of creating this job or project, I guess is a term that QuickBooks also uses and printing out a piece of paper and handing that to a technician. And they would write things on paper. We would send out quotes digitally, but there was just a lot of paperwork being used and random emails being used. And so nowhere in a lot of folders being kept that had pieces of paper stuffed into them. So anyway, that's kind of how we've been operating, trying to get ourself into the 21st century.

Speaker 3: Understood. Now, are you using the projects feature within QuickBooks Online today? We

Speaker 2: Are, yes, we are.

Speaker 3: Great. Yeah. And how's that experience been?

Speaker 2: It is good for, especially now with online, it's pretty easy to see your cost analysis, which helps in both looking at if there's items that you've done a hard quote for, you can see that profitability, if there's, there's certain jobs that we really aren't, aren't a cost plus or cost plus material labor materials type company in terms of the way we invoice, we kind of do more fixed fee. But in the case of several of our customers that we have longstanding relationships with, there are times that those quotes come after the work has been completed, knowing that they have an idea and they trust us. So it's worked well with that piece. Some of the reporting functionality that would be helpful for us, QuickBooks doesn't always have, and we have to do a lot of manual spreadsheet work, which I don't love, but we'll do as well. So it works okay. It works okay, but we aren't great and consistent about the documentation piece for that matter. And so it's hard to do a search on a specific piece of equipment by serial number and what work did we do and what was done on that piece of equipment at the time, if it's reoccurring or it comes back in to our facility. So QuickBooks, I'm sure we could determine some of the tags and pieces that we might be able to better utilize to our advantage, but it's not really geared for that.

Speaker 3: That's right. Yep. Understood. So I have a better sense of the company scope. Of the 13 employees, how many technicians do you guys currently have?

Speaker 2: We have four full-time technicians and one part-time technician.

Speaker 3: Okay, great. And are they all there in Tennessee?

Speaker 2: Yes, they

Speaker 3: Are.

Speaker 2: And they do work both in the facility and then we also will do work at our customer's facility as well.

Speaker 3: Got it. Okay. Very good. So in thinking about the customer, what would you say is the percentage breakdown between construction projects versus service contracts?

Speaker 2: Well, and the way we do it is, well, we don't really mean, I think I know what you mean by construction. We will go in and maybe pull a piece of equipment and replace it, or we'll take it back to our facility, repair it, then bring it back and install it. So I would say that's a growing part of our business. So right now from a number of jobs, I would say 30%, maybe closer to 20, I should rephrase that. It's probably closer to 20% on the number of jobs, but the revenue piece is probably going to be 30%.

Speaker 3: Got it. Great. So I want to talk a little bit more about your needs and the process of evaluating service trade. So when you were looking at field service management tools, what were you hoping it would accomplish for the company?

Speaker 2: Getting everything in a digital format and off paper in a digital format to where we improve our quality control, improve any type of rework that might have to be done, improve efficiencies in our workplace and improve customer satisfaction with regards to being able to give them some type of report on what had been done in testing documentation as well. So that could be multiple things, but in terms of improving that customer satisfaction on the backside of that with having professional report, that would be accurate in terms of the diagnosis, repair, testing, et cetera.

Speaker 3: Yes. And so as you were looking at different vendors of all the different criteria, what would you say was at the top of your list in terms of what was most important to you?

Speaker 2: It's changed a bit, but I would say it's ebbed and flowed. What I started out with, I had to scale back significantly because what I wanted didn't fully exist, but I would say ease of use and ease of use, both on the transition side, like starting the software as well as for the technicians that are utilizing the service. So I think those probably at the end of this year long analysis. I think that those two factors were crucial while also meeting the needs of giving us accurate, consistent processes that are digitally captured.

Speaker 3: Yes. Now you mentioned there's potentially some dream features, some things that you had hoped for that maybe you didn't see in the marketplace. Can you tell me a little bit more about some of those features?

Speaker 2: Something that would fully integrate with accounting, our accounting software, that's the selfish side of me. I was hoping to really draw a line between where the only people that would be utilizing QuickBooks would strictly be a tax tool and a business analysis from a p and l perspective. But something that would, and of course fine with doing payroll, but in my world, I envisioned something that would sink interchangeably in real time if I'm asking for whatever I could design in real time. There are software systems out there specifically for our industry. There is a software system out there, it's very expensive, a very lengthy training and expensive training process, and you're fully relying upon their financial software, their financial platform. And we've done that before. And in 2013, it was not cloud-based back then and had a major server issue and lost a lot of our data. So we are like, okay, I do not want to. And also in working with our CPAs, it was not always easy to share your financial information among a proprietary financial system versus something that's more broadly used. We're not that big to where we need a customized financial platform or so anyway.

Speaker 3: And what software was that

Speaker 2: At the time? It's no one grieving in business.

Speaker 1: Okay. Oh,

Speaker 2: The one that did exist, a CS, it stood for something. If you typed in a CS, you'll come up with some other company name that has nothing to do with it now. And the software system we looked at that exists today, they just sold to A BB, which is a big electrical motor drive type company out of Sweden. And I'm drawing a blank on their name, but there's another software system that's very geared towards our industry. I'll think of it here in a minute.

Speaker 3: Yeah, fair enough. So in thinking about these field service management tools like service trade, do you think of the software as a tool to drive more revenue or do you think about it more in the context of cutting costs?

Speaker 2: Both. I think it'll drive more revenue because we'll have higher customer satisfaction in terms of what we can deliver to our customers. I think in cutting costs, it will cut costs. I think we'll see less warranty work. Not that we have a ton of warranty work, but we do have warranty work as we back any type of service work that we do. And so if something fails within a certain time period, we will redo that for at no cost to the client. So I think it'll improve our warranty work, and I also think it will improve our output. I think we will be more efficient in our facility because it will be very, be more clear. 90% will be black and white. There's still going to be some percentage that's not, but so I think it'll improve our efficiencies which affect us on the cost side.

Speaker 3: Yep, that makes sense. Now, you mentioned having a number of the procedures be paper-based or manual. So when you think about the marketplace of these software packages, as you know, they can range from construction projects to service management. And so when you were thinking about field service management tools, what were some of the key features that are most relevant to you?

Speaker 2: When you say field service, do you mean going out into the field and doing work there? Is that what you mean by field service? I think they're just, for us, having a documented digital checklist of the pre-work that's required. And a lot of that is making sure you're checking off that these tools are needed or what's the equipment that you're bringing in? Is there going to be an open path? Has the appointment been made with the client? Are they expecting you? What type of for us, it's what type of voltage? Or there's some other criteria, is this power turned off or do you need a crane present? Yes. So those that we have that checklist, but it's not, and it is in a digital format but not readily accessible to our technicians for them to access and own. They look to management to own it.

Speaker 2: So for them to own the pre-work and even when they're at the facility, I mean, some of it might be it's very customized so that it's hard to follow a very standard process, but something to include even is did you clean up around, you gathered all your tolls, is everything cleaned up before you left? Did you have someone sign off on this work? Or even for the person who sets up that field service work, because a lot of things, those are a bit more of a project typically lasting a day, but sometimes they might go a couple of days depending on the complexity, is that person, the who's engineering person can even put in, oh, don't forget, test this, test this. They can customize it for that particular project as well if need be. And I think also certainly something I haven't talked about is something that's very easy to, you're clock in, clock out when you're

Speaker 1: On

Speaker 2: Onsite. So knowing the actual time that is going into that work.

Speaker 3: That makes a lot of sense. So here's a question from one to 10 where one is not important and 10 is very important. How important is it to have an all-in-one solution for you?

Speaker 2: Like an all-in-one solution that I mentioned before without the, well, I would rate it differently than our operations director. Tell me more. So maybe I'll average that out. So I'd say a seven and a half

Speaker 2: I view, I think the more that you have to duplicate, you go, oh, you can capture it here in this system. But then you also have to, if you want to know your full cost or if you want to know your actual cost on the work or your pay, the vendor capture the purchase order, capture, the actual job to know the profitability, to capture that job in the system and the customer's po. If any of that that has to be done twice by a human has a very high likelihood of error. I say a high higher likelihood, I shouldn't say a high, it has a higher likelihood of error. I mean, just transposing numbers, lots of just mistyping. So that's why I, and just their time, your office staff, your people and are not spending more time doing duplicate entry. So I think that is why I was rating it as something higher, something like service trade. It had certain functionalities that you could do, but then you would have to go in and enter it into QuickBooks, which I understand or you don't, but just trying to get that full picture was, yeah, would be ideal. But then our operations folks, they're like, I'd rather the office staff enter things twice then and it'd be much simpler for our technicians to capture.

Speaker 3: Interesting. So would you say that because averaging out at a seven, so your perspective would be that, is it your score higher and then your

Speaker 2: Lower My score is higher, lower, yes. And their score lower? Yes.

Speaker 3: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, fair enough. Fair enough. How much of a disparity between your score and their theoretically, right?

Speaker 2: Oh, I think they would love it. I think they would think it was fantastic for something that fully integrated. I think that's a bonus and that's great. But I also think that they just, let's just take one step at a time and get our technicians, our operations in a disciplined digitalized format.

Speaker 3: Yes. Okay. That makes sense. Now, you talked about integrations quite a bit. So you mentioned the financial system like QuickBooks. Are there other integrations that are critical to you?

Speaker 2: Not for us at this time, I don't think so. No, that's probably our main, since that's been our main operating system, QuickBooks would be the only one. And then we do payroll through QuickBooks. We do. Yeah, I think that's really the one thing that was interesting that service trade had that invoicing feature, but they did not keep up with real time sales tax changes. And so that was another integration that would've been required. And so I really was like, well, I just assumed to minimize the number of, personally the number of integrations and systems that we're using.

Speaker 3: Yes. Yep. That's understandable. So in thinking about this decision, who was all involved in terms of making the decision on which provider or which solution you ultimately ended up using or going to use?

Speaker 2: The president of our company who has sales responsibility as well as, I mean still bottom line responsibility myself in the finance side. I also have a technical background. I've been working with the company for a long time and understand the processes pretty well, and our director of operations,

Speaker 3: Yes. Okay, great. That sounds like you were primarily driving the effort and then you would bring them into certain conversations and presentations.

Speaker 2: Yes. Yes. That is true. I have, if you're familiar with the, it was My Rock, I dunno if you're familiar with EOS? Yes, yes. Very familiar with E os. So it was My Rock. I have worked for the company for 16, 17 years and our director of operations has been there a little over a year, and our president of the company has been there, gosh, I think he's been there since 2006, so 2000. Anyway, he's been there the longest. But my involvement just of seeing the company evolve, of course, I don't have as much intimate of the day in and day out of we the hour by hour for our operations, but have been involved. And I think we started at one point, I mean it was manually data. Some data was captured manually when the business was purchased from purchase the partner out. Then it was family business with my dad and my mom and my mom was writing debits and credits in a book too. When I got involved, let's go to Peachtree, then let's go to this a CS system. Then it was moved to QuickBooks and then looking at some systems from there.

Speaker 3: Yep. Okay. That's great. So just want to touch a little bit more on how service trade stacked up to other providers that you evaluated. So in thinking about service trade strengths, how did they compare or what are some of the strengths that Service Trade had relative to competitors?

Speaker 2: Gosh, now I have to go back and

Speaker 2: Looked at so many, although I spent, and I think service trade was one that I was inclined with the most, but I liked how it just seemed that the way that the process flow for under capturing the equipment data, capturing any type of, or the communication that could take place amongst the team, how you could send, I think it was service trade. You could send purchase orders directly from service trade that would, would be disguised as an email from whomever is sending it not from service trade necessarily, and how it could also capture video. I think it was video and pictures, or was it just pictures? But I think for sure pictures you could attach to it.

Speaker 2: The price point was also, I thought, very competitive. I looked at a program, some other programs that might've had a bit more technical aptitude within them for the type of equipment that we were using, but the price of those, just the juice wasn't worth the squeeze for our business. And so the price point also drew me to service trade. And let's see. I think it just seemed like the workflow and the terminology, it seemed to make sense to us when I was initially evaluating it. The part that, well, yeah, so I'll just leave it at that.

Speaker 3: Yeah, fair enough. So let's just kind of probe a little bit on the other side of that continuum. What would you say are some of service trade's weaknesses compared to others that you evaluated?

Speaker 2: It was the duplicate of entry from purchase orders, vendor bills time, the labor that was going to be put into the actual job. It was, well, you still want to use QuickBooks to get your actual costs, but service Tray can give you a general cost.

Speaker 2: And granted, maybe the sales function would feel differently about that statement than someone on the finance side. But I tend to the accuracy piece of it. And also even, well, you can get the cost of the parts on the items as long as once you get the invoice, you go back in and you can correct any costs or make any adjustments for shipping or any kind of other fees. But meanwhile, you're also having to do that in QuickBooks. So I thought that was just a little more if you want to get a better idea on your cost or your profitability of a job. So that was not as appealing either. And then there was something that Service Trade just came out with that I thought was very interesting, although that was at a higher price point, which then started making that cost benefit analysis kind of upside down was the, what do they call it as a task list might be I, they term it a task list, but more of it is a task list that could be created. They have that checkbox of what steps to do. And so was, I found that being very interesting for down the road as for service trade, but it was set an additional cost. I think it went up into a different tier platform for them, whereas the one that we went with, it's part of that platform and has some AI even with it. That has been very surprisingly good.

Speaker 3: Okay, very good. It was early days on that. So who did you end up selecting

Speaker 2: A software called Maintain X?

Speaker 3: Maintain X. Okay.

Speaker 2: It is a little bit less expensive per user on than Servicer. Actually, I say that it is less expensive than service trade. Just so happens. One thing that Servicer does is your office staff working on a desktop, there's not a fee for those users, it's just a technician fee, whereas maintain access for anyone who wants access, but you use it either on your phone, on a tablet, service trade. That was another thing they did, I think prefer the iOS platforms versus we do not provide cell phones to our texts. We give them an allowance, but we do provide, but we do have tablets. They're not iPads. They're Samsung, the rough Tumble tablets and those. So knowing Maintain X doesn't care what platform it's using. It also, as I said, it has that task list feature

Speaker 2: That comes with it, and it is very flexible. Like I said, the AI on it, I've been surprised at how good that feature is. And granted, a lot of it depends upon what you type in, depends upon what you're going to get out of it, but it's been surprising of how that can just, if you kind of describe what you're after and how it can create a task list for you, it does have, again, you can alpha numeric pass fail. Yes, no, lots of different options to choose from, and it does give you a bit more accurate information. On the cost side, again, there's going to be some duplicate entry like there was with Service Trade for us on some items, but we've realized that's going to be something we can't quite remedy. Short term Maintain X does have the capability to, they have an complete open API system, and so they will work an engineer for that communication down the road with QuickBooks, as QuickBooks has an open API for the most part. And so that is something that they offer, but it's more of a let's just get started then. Then we'll move on to the syncing with

Speaker 3: QuickBooks. Yeah. So it sounds like maintain X had some pretty compelling features of all those differentiated factors. What would you say was the ultimate deciding factor? Was it one or was it a combination of factors that led you to choose maintain X?

Speaker 2: It is, it's probably the main cost certainly plays a part. I think it's something that honestly, a year from now, if we were to make a change, we would not be losing. It'd be possible to make a change. So we're not fully relying upon maintain X to have all of our data. QuickBooks will still have a lot of that data, but I view it as not like some other systems. It's like, wow, once you populate that and spend that kind of time and that kind of money, it's hard to back out of and maintain X. And I look at even the service trades. I mean, granted, I don't want to be flippant about $7,000, but it's not like it's $25,000 to where you could make a change. And the ease of use maintain both the onboarding and the execution for our technicians, I think will be very easy or easier for them who are not necessarily, some of them are more tech savvy than others.

Speaker 3: That makes sense. Just two last questions for you, then we'll wrap.

Speaker 2: Okay.

Speaker 3: So want to just close with some color on the service trade sales team. So from your standpoint, what did the sales team do well?

Speaker 2: Oh, meta was fantastic and very responsive. Was very quick to try to research and find any additional information for me, both in email, text form, as well as trying to find resources that might be able to answer questions that she could not. Specifically on the accounting side. I was very, even when I reached back out to her after the time that she spent, and I've been in a sales role in a different lifetime, and so she was very patient too with my questions.

Speaker 3: Very good. And the other side of that continuum, what do you think could have been done better in the sales process?

Speaker 2: I think, and granted, I have to again, keep in mind the personality of a salesperson versus the personality of someone that's more on the finance side or the accounting side, or the QuickBooks side. The last person that I met with was helpful, and the first person I met with I felt was a bit more, what's the term? Wasn't as enthusiastic in answering my questions, if that makes any sense. Absolutely. And maybe a bit more put off by some of the questions that was being asked. But I think the, yeah, and I got the impression certainly on from, and granted that's not met as world of maybe knowing fully the capabilities between service trade and QuickBooks or a platform like QuickBooks, but that seemed like it was very much of a, this is, and that's okay. At least you get an honest answer of this is not going to be an area where we're going to be putting our time into developing in the immediate future. So I knew that was going to come to a, like I said, at least they were being honest, but that was one reason that I was like, okay, I'm not sure this will be a good platform that we want to partner with to look for potential making our lives easier over time. Yes.

Speaker 3: Got it. Well, Stephanie, this has been super insightful. I mean, the half hour just flew by. I know we went just a touch over, so thank you for your time. This is great insight. I'm sure the team is going to get a lot out of this. So thank you again, and you have a great day.

Speaker 2: Thanks, Dick. All right, you too.

Speaker 3: All right, take care.

Speaker 2: You too. All right. Bye.