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Columbus firm finds big niche in radon mitigation

By BRANDON KLEIN
Daily Reporter Staff Writer

Location can be everything in some businesses and when someone is in the radon mitigation business, there are few better places to be than in central Ohio.

Shad Evans and Bill Dziatkowicz of Columbus-based Radon Be Gone have been taking advantage of their location for the past dozen years.

Radon is radioactive, colorless, odorless, tasteless noble gas and central Ohio's geology makes it Radon Be Gone's services to test for and eliminate radon in homes and buildings a good fit for the market.

"Central Ohio is really the hotspot of radon in the nation," Dziatkowicz said. Delaware, Franklin, Knox and Licking counties are among the top areas for radon.

Evans and Dziatkowicz started out as home inspectors in 2000, doing radon testing of homes as part of the work. They branched off with another owner who left the business.

But after completing their first year of \$1 million in sales in 2016, the two wanted to cut back on their 70-plus hour work weeks and focus on growing the business in other areas.

They partnered with Maximum Value Partners, small business coaching firm, which encourages small businesses to engage with their competition. The firm works with companies that hire up to 25 employees with sales of about \$1 million.

Adam Sonnhalter, a business coach at MVP, said small business owners who are driving the services often find themselves not growing their businesses further. MVP coaches often hear their clients joke that they need to clone themselves to run their businesses.

"One good person in a small organization can make a ton of difference," Sonnhalter said.

But one resource small businesses often don't consider is their competition. Sonnhalter said it's important for businesses to get to know them.

For instance, MVP had two information technology clients. One had an employee that he couldn't keep busy. The other was in need of an employee. Discussions lead for the employee to work for the other company and has been performed well for the last five years, Sonnhalter said.

But developing a relationship with the competition can lead to what MVP calls a "non-acquisition acquisition."

The practice involves a business acquiring many assets from its competition such as clients, employees and technology, without acquiring the actual company. That could produce upfront savings along with top talent, Sonnhalter said.

The owners of Radon Be Gone have benefited from this practice. They hired one competitor who had 31 years of experience in the industry.

They also hired two people who owned a small radon company. The owner became overwhelmed with the paperwork involved that was sucking up his evenings and weekends. The owner had some concerns, though, of selling his business to Radon Be Gone.

"So we decided to be a bit creative," Sonnhalter said. "Instead of acquiring his business, RBG instead agreed to hire him and one of his key employees ... As part of the agreement to hire this competitor, he also agreed to transition his ongoing clients to RBG as well as forward his phone number to RBG.

"So the key things RBG 'acquired,'" Sonnhalter said. "As part of this 'non-acquisition' acquisition included: two key seasoned employees who were also both licensees and one of whom had skills and interest in doing some business development; current and past client list; ongoing jobs and sales pipeline of potential jobs, and phone number."

The practice has helped Radon Be Gone grow since 2017. The company now has 18 employees, up from five in 2013. They are also relocating a half-mile to a new headquarters at the intersection of state Routes 161 and 3.

The company's new home is 5,000 square feet, more than double its previous location, with nearly half devoted to warehouse uses. Radon Be Gone also added a third truck to increase their capacity.

Additionally, Evans and Dziatkowicz now have time to focus on growing the company's commercial base, providing services to corporate buildings and multi-family dwellings as residential homes now make up 85 percent of their business.

"We don't want to be so codependent on the real estate market," Dziatkowicz said.

Aside from the business, the owners are working to raise awareness about radon testing.

They said most people find out

about the service from their real estate agents or family members over the last few years. Agents used to avoid the subject but over the last five years have brought to ensure their clients are aware of any potential problems.

They're also working with people who have suffered from radon and share their story throughout the area.

Evans said awareness is increasing at the national level as some federal agencies require radon testing for properties they're involved with.

"It's become less about making money and more about helping people more aware of what's in their home," Dziatkowicz said.

