

Strong Teams, Growing Companies: Certified Retail Solutions



### Certified Retail Solutions

### A Vested for Growth Business Champion



**FROM LEFT: JACK KELLY, DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY;  
SCOTT JOHNSON, PRESIDENT; BILL LOVEJOY, VICE PRESIDENT; AMY ALDEN,  
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS**

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You might never think about the technology your local store uses, but Scott Johnson does.

As CEO of Dover-based Certified Retail Solutions, he makes sure his retail clients have everything they need to process sales transactions smoothly. From credit card pin pads to cash registers to computer network servers, Johnson and his team oversee the technology lifecycle for such retailers as Brookstone and J.Jill.

Johnson started buying used computer equipment and technology factory returns as a side business in 1991. He refurbished used parts, then sold them to computer service companies and original equipment manufacturers like IBM. By 1996 his business had become the largest supplier of IBM ThinkPad parts in Europe.

As technology components became cheaper—and less profitable—Johnson added repair to his company's service menu. His retail clientele was also growing.



“Retail systems are used constantly for 10 hours a day. Because of the wear, they have a higher failure rate,” said Johnson.

Then the Great Recession of 2008 decimated the economy. As Johnson's retail clients asked for help making do with less, corporate giants jettisoned skilled technicians. Those experienced repair and installation techs became available as needed through high-tech temp agencies.

Yankee Candle was one of Certified's first lifecycle clients, meaning that Certified was tapped to design, equip, install and maintain its electronic retail systems. When the candle company needed to update its technology, Certified bought back the old equipment, repaired it, and sold parts or whole units to other customers.

That flexibility and responsiveness have helped Certified maintain a steady 20-percent annual sales growth for several years, and 2016 looks to keep pace, said Johnson.

And although the company still relies heavily on contract field techs, a recent surge in business has Johnson looking to add as many as 15 more full-time employees to his current workforce of 85.

Along with steady sales, Johnson defines Certified's success in part by the supplier awards it has received. Toshiba named Certified a Diamond Partner and a Platinum Partner Reseller for meeting rigorous sales, service and product knowledge requirements.

Among Certified's newest services are point-of-sale (POS) kiosks. The company manufactures food-ordering kiosks that bring POS, online, and mobile functionality within the same system.

To keep up with emerging technologies, Certified has developed an internship program with Dover Regional Career Technical Center. It follows a "learn, do, learn" model inspired by a talk Johnson heard at Massachusetts Maritime Academy on Cape Cod.

Certified's interns learn a skill, work on their own, then build on what they've learned with new skills.

In two decades in business, Johnson said he has learned that any company's success rests on its people.

"The more you share, the more they understand, and the more they can help you improve the company," he said. "You cannot be an island and make it."

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