

Entrepreneur of the Year

Dave Lindsey
CEO, DEFENDER Direct

Relatively few business leaders have been awarded Ernst & Young's coveted "Entrepreneur of the Year" title in the 24 years since the program started. Across the country, hundreds of people are nominated in 15 categories, and the competition is fierce at the regional level.

When DEFENDER DirectSM Founder and CEO Dave Lindsey learned he received the 2010 title in "Retail and Consumer Products" for the Midwest Region, he was somewhat overwhelmed. But, as has been the case since he started the company in 1998, he shared the credit with those around him.

"We've had a lot of success with DEFENDER," he says "We started with the idea of building the company and building a family at the same time, and I think of everyone on our team as part of the family that got us here."

A Channel Partner Since Day One

In just 12 years DEFENDER Direct has become the largest ADT[®] authorized dealer in the U.S., with more than 1,500 employees in 120 major cities. As a UTC Fire & Security channel partner, Lindsey says using products like the GE Simon XT[™] and GE Concord as the foundation for the residential and small businesses he services, has been critical to the company's success.

"In 1998, we made the decision to go with wireless systems, and they were clearly the best on the market, first as ITI, then as GE Security. Through all the changes, the people stayed the same, and that was, and still is, very important," he says. "We have always had tremendous support from key people, including Rich Buis and Ken Parker, Bob Haskins, Kirk MacDowell and Mark Barry. They partnered with us and care as much about our growth as we do.

"We also stayed laser-focused on doing what we do better than anyone else. By staying in a market we understood, and growing that as a world-class operation, we were able to leverage our volume. As a channel partner, UTC has been flexible in devising products, kits and pricing that fit the needs of our customers.

"They understand the business; not just the equipment but also the culture we've built. So we standardized on this platform and they hold training sessions in our sales centers and attend our conferences and meetings. Every one of our managers and technicians has been in classes with leaders from UTC; knowing the people you do business with on a first-name basis makes a difference," Lindsey added.

Investing in People Creates Long-Term Success

Growing the business from a spare bedroom to more than \$250 million in annual revenue clearly wasn't a snap. But Lindsey believes it was somewhat of an asset to have limited capital in the early days. "There are companies that start out with lots of capital and I think that can cause sloppiness and a feeling of success when you need to be so fiscally disciplined at the beginning."

When asked about other advice he might have for entrepreneurs, Lindsey hesitates, not wanting to sound cliché in his response. "A friend of mine gave me a Jim Rohn tape and told me to listen to it. His philosophy of focusing on values and self-improvement in all employees hit a chord in me. He believed that if you work harder on yourself than on your business, you will create success. I think he was right about that because too much work on the job eventually causes a loss of energy that leads to burnout.

"Every new employee is told from their first day, what we call Culture Day, that we think they are great people and are prepared to invest in them. Then we make it personal and ask them to make that same commitment, to themselves first and then to DEFENDER. It's working really well so far," he says with pride.

Security Products by GE are now part of the UTC Fire & Security family



UTC Fire & Security

A United Technologies Company

© 2010 UTC Fire & Security. All rights reserved.

GE and the GE monogram are trademarks of the General Electric Company and are under license to UTC Fire & Security, 9 Farm Springs Road, Farmington, CT 06034-4065