

Twenty-one years ago Jerry Winkley was looking for a career change. He had been working as a diesel mechanic and was considering family farming but was open to new ideas. He was also looking at a long-term approach for his professional and financial destiny. Each day, he and his wife would listen to Paul Harvey's radio talk show over lunch. Repeatedly he heard Mr. Harvey mention ServiceMaster, a franchise opportunity that one day intrigued him enough to request the packet of information. In January 1988, Jerry, his wife Lisa, and their two small children moved to Wichita to start their ServiceMaster business.

"I had no knowledge of business or bookkeeping when I started," Jerry explained. "I became a sponge for knowledge from people that were willing to teach me. I also forced myself to accept counsel I was given, even if it made me uncomfortable, so I could learn to stretch myself and acquire new skills. Cash flow was also a challenge, so I tried to learn from my mentors how to manage cash flow, kept a limit on debt, and how to market effectively."

Jerry met his local economy with knowledge of my industry as a whole and various other industries. I have worked on strategic planning with KSBDC, worked through acquisition issues, worked on management structure, and financial planning," he said.

Secret to Success
"Selling is making enough sales calls, make the right type of sales calls, and calling on the right type of customers. Once you get a customer — work to keep them. It's easy to get a customer — it's a lot harder to keep them."