

# EXCELLENCE THROUGH ADVERSITY

Mighty Oaks and Heritage Office Furnishings partner up to overcome the odds.



Shortly before midnight on Saturday, April 26, 2008, fire engulfed the office building where information technology service provider Mighty Oaks was located. The company's unit was completely destroyed.

By 3:00 Sunday morning, Mighty Oaks was back in business.

Two weeks after that, with the help of Heritage Office Furnishings, Mighty Oaks was in operation at a new location.

For most businesses, a major fire is a disaster. Mighty Oaks CEO Paul Weyer saw it as an opportunity, one that his company was well prepared to meet — with excellence.

During the weeks following the fire, Mighty Oaks not only carried on business as usual, it grew, hiring new staff and taking on new clients. Weyer attributes his business's ability to rise above the devastation to four factors: planning, passion, people and partnerships.

## Planning

When he received the late-night call telling him his office was on fire, Weyer headed out with his hard hat and work boots, expecting to have to haul records and equipment out of the building.

Not a chance. The whole building was ablaze, with flames roaring 75 feet into the air. Afterwards, you could look up through what had been the second-floor office and see the sky.

As Weyer watched the structure burn, outside of concern whether anyone had been hurt, his mind was focused not on loss, but on the work involved in the next steps.

Mighty Oaks designs, integrates and manages IT for business and health industry clients on Vancouver Island and across North America. Among the services Mighty Oaks offers is business continuity planning, and the company's own business continuity plan was well developed. Weyer put it into action right away.

Within three hours, the phone system had been switched to provide clients with continued access to the company's around-the-clock IT support service.

Loss of onsite hard drives and servers posed no problem because all data and functions were backed up, online and physically, with hard drives and equipment stored at other locations.

Staff members, all seasoned professionals, were fully prepared to take care of business from their home offices for a while. Emails went



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out to suppliers and clients on Sunday, advising them of the fire and reassuring them that Mighty Oaks would carry on as usual. Not one client or supplier was lost.

## Passion, People & Partnerships

Paul Weyer will tell you that passion, people and partnerships are fundamental to the way Mighty Oaks works, and were essential to the company's ability to emerge stronger than ever from the fire.

Mighty Oaks hires only senior IT people with a minimum 15 years of experience. They are partners, completely responsible and accountable for their clients. Weyer says, "They will look after their clients because they understand that great long term customer service is what will make them, the people that we employ, happy, and will also make our clients happy."

That attitude ensured that service remained at its usual high level despite the fire. "Our people were passionate before the fire, they were passionate during the transition. Because we have great people, passionate people who care about what they do, and because we were prepared and followed our plan, the only negative effect was the extra work it took to deal with everything."

Clients are also considered long term business partners. Mighty Oaks endorses the principle that it is in the company's best interest to do always what is in the best interest of its clients. One of the first partners to respond that Sunday was Heritage, a Mighty Oaks IT client with shared values about service, community and environmental sustainability.

CEO Neville Grigg invited Mighty Oaks to move into the Heritage showroom for the short term. "With a few extension cords and Ethernet hubs we can have you in a productive workspace by 8:00 a.m. Monday morning," Grigg said.

As it turned out, Mighty Oaks didn't need to take Heritage up on that offer, but did use the Heritage board room for a meeting and chose Heritage to design and supply furniture for the new location Weyer secured a few days later.

As soon as the phone and alarm systems and cable hookups were installed, Heritage brought in loaner desks, chairs, boardroom table and storage units, and the new location was good to go.

In the meantime, Mighty Oaks worked with Heritage staff to design a better office and order new furniture. Heritage planner Kevin Dawson recommended the versatile Teknion Expansion line. "It was the best product to give them the look they wanted and the privacy they wanted within their budget," Dawson said.

Heritage's Teknion recommendation also met Mighty Oaks's commitment to environmental responsibility. Considered an industry leader in Canada in overall environmental policy, Teknion was the first manufacturer of office furniture to be ISO (International Standardization Organization) certified for the implementation of its environmental management system in all facilities and the first to receive GREENGUARD™ certification for indoor air quality.

## Happy Ending

The new Mighty Oaks office is inviting, uncluttered and efficient. Work stations are designed to give staff privacy and freedom from distraction while working with clients, but the open plan also facilitates interaction and promotes a sense of community.

Weyer says that in the long run, the outcome of the fire was nothing but positive for Mighty Oaks. The location is superior. Not only the furniture but all the tools and equipment are new. Upgraded software, rebuilt systems and an office design that lets everyone be more effective means that Mighty Oaks provides even better service to clients.



An unanticipated benefit was the outpouring of support from other businesses, whether acquaintances, clients or competitors. "You learn what people are really made of when you go through a difficult time," Weyer says.

Heritage in particular stood out. For Weyer, one of the highlights of the experience was Heritage's willingness and ability to support Mighty Oaks in any way it could.

"Heritage made a complete, enthusiastic offering from the beginning," Weyer says, "and it wasn't just words. Heritage backed it up 100%. Whatever Neville promised happened, and quickly."

Planning, passion, people and partnerships — a formula for excellence through adversity, tested and proofed by fire.



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