

Today the ASD family has grown to more than 200 employees, while still keeping that special feeling of a family owned and operated business. Learn more from Kevin Czachor, Marty Czachor, and Kathy Kelley about how ASD got started, where they've been, and where they are going in this professional spotlight feature.

How did ASD get started? Where does the story begin?

Kevin: In 1972, our parents, Martin and Barbara Czachor, decided to start a telephone answering business for local companies in their area. My mother is a perfectionist and is all about mutual respect. She has always made it a priority to make our staff and callers feel respected. She found very quickly that funeral directors fit that criteria perfectly. They looked for quality, they were always respectful to our staff, and they sold value.

With the technology that was available to them, they were only able to serve their local community and hometown of Glenolden, Pennsylvania. There weren't enough funeral directors nearby to sustain an answering service exclusively for the funeral profession. Then in the mid-1990s, toll free service became available and that changed up the world. It allowed us to reach more people and as a family we decided that we were going to exclusively reach out to the funeral profession. At that point, we were working with about 300 funeral homes locally and now we serve nearly half of the funeral homes in the United States.

What makes ASD unique?

Kathy: It is our employees and our technology. Without the people that make up who we are, the technology would mean nothing to our funeral directors. The people in our organization are truly what make the company so special. We have an opportunity to bring in many people each year at the entry level and pretty quickly we can target who is going to be a great asset to our company. We work really hard and do a lot to make sure we keep the employees we see the most potential in. Our success as a whole comes largely from the time we put into finding the perfect people - we would be nothing without them.

What are ASD's goals right now?

Marty: World domination - just kidding. Our goal has always been and continues to be on the funeral profession. We are always looking for ways to improve what we do. We continue to meet with our clients and listen to the problems that they are running into and even if it doesn't seem like it is directly an ASD related issue, we still help them search for resolutions. This allows us to grow and potentially develop new services and new solutions that don't even exist today.

What makes ASD's technology stand out from competition?

Marty: Our systems are all developed and designed in house. Nothing that we run is commercial software and this

allows us to completely customize our service specifically for the funeral profession. Since our clients are so focused and driven, we are quickly able to come up with solutions to their needs and make changes as our clients need them. This is a luxury that no one else can offer. I've lost track of how many patents we have on our technology, but I do believe it's close to 10 at this point.

What do you love most about ASD?

Marty: I love that each day we truly get to help people. We get to help families get through a difficult time and help free up time for funeral directors so they can live their life and not spend every minute tied to their phones or physically at the funeral home.

Kathy: For me it's our team and being able to work in an industry that is home to so many caring people. It's an amazing feeling to go to work each day and feel like we are making a difference. We get to help make our funeral directors' lives a little easier and we also get to help families across the United States and Canada - I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Kevin: These days funeral directors are pulled in a thousand different directions each day, so any tool we can provide to them that gives them a few seconds here or a few minutes there can save them hours of headaches.

What are some habits that you have that has helped make ASD successful?

Kathy: We are constantly looking for ways to enhance our service. We never sit still. We implement new ideas that sometimes work great and other times we find ourselves going back to the way we used to do things - but we never stop trying to make our service the best it can be. As a company we allow ourselves to be under constant evolution and invest a lot of time communicating with our customers and employees to make sure there isn't a better or more efficient way of doing things.

Marty: What Kathy just mentioned is the key to our success. We look at our problems, our mistakes, and missteps each week and pinpoint what we did wrong and how we can fix it. Having a weekly review of our performance is how we never make the same mistake twice. Whether that is training or a system change, we have the luxury to do both very quickly. We are always making improvements and the growth has followed.

PERSONAL SPOTLIGHT



Kathy Kelley - Treasurer

What is the best business advice you have ever received?

We are sometimes faced with very difficult decisions in this business, but at the end of the day we always ask ourselves, "what is the right thing to do?" even if that's not the easiest path.

What are some of your favorite ways to unwind and spend your free time?

I love to be outside as well. I like to ski, scuba dive, and just be outside. Summer is my favorite time of year, so in the winter I try to get to Florida or somewhere warm as much as I can. I can handle snow for a day or two, but then I'm just done with it.

Looking forward to the future, what are you most excited about?

I am excited to see the growth within our company and with our current employees and how they will advance in their careers. My son and daughter both work for ASD now and they see things from a different perspective than I do, I love getting new ideas from them and other employees. We have been at this for so long, ASD is like one big family to us. We have 81 employees who have been with our company for 5 years or more - it's very humbling and pretty remarkable.



PERSONAL SPOTLIGHT



Marty Czachor - Vice President

What is the best business advice you have ever received?

Do what is right. Making money is the last thing we think about – it's not our focus. We are more about problem solving and making the service we offer the best it can be, when you do that – the money will follow.

What are some of your favorite ways to unwind and spend your free time?

I love snowboarding in Vail. I am looking forward to getting back there twice this year. In the winter, it can be dark and dreary outside and you can feel like you have to stay locked inside, but I love to get out and experience fresh air and be active outside.

Looking forward to the future, what are you most excited about?

I love thinking about the future and what the world can be like. I am excited to create new solutions to problems we don't even have yet. ASD allows us to find creative solutions every single day, and I look forward to continuing that. Right now, we are always looking for redundancy and single points of failure, so that one mistake can't take the whole company down. When callers pick the phone up, they expect us to be there – and when they do, we want to offer them the best possible service. I look forward to making that happen.



PERSONAL SPOTLIGHT



Kevin Czachor - Vice President

What is the best business advice you have ever received?

Never make excuses. With our business, we offer something that most people can't - we are 100% transparent. With everything we do, our clients - the funeral directors - can go in, listen, and scrutinize our process. There is no point in trying to make excuses. We are in a business that is operated by human beings, there will be mistakes. Nobody is perfect. Integrity for us is number one. We own up to issues that may need to be improved and then quickly take steps to make sure that particular issue does not reoccur.

What are some of your favorite ways to unwind and spend your free time?

I love things found in nature. Pretty much anything that can get me outside, I absolutely love. My wife and I have four kids so they have that instilled in them as well. The whole family is certified in scuba diving and we can all ski. You'll see some overlap with Marty, Kathy, myself, and our families - we all have similar interests and it's fun when we can get our families together for trips. We are also all incredibly active in our community and spend time volunteering at local events and our church as well.

Looking forward to the future, what are you most excited about?

I am excited to continue to eliminate headaches that funeral directors experience. I am excited to continue to give them the tools that will allow them to grow their business. Many people don't understand how exactly an answering service can provide so much, but we have found many ways to make significant improvements to the lives of our clients and I look forward to continuing to do so. **FBA**

