

“Growing the Good”: Palmer Johnson Helps Healthcare Workers Stay Safe

DAVE CASPER: Welcome to growing the good. I'm Dave Casper, head of BMOs, North American commercial banking business. We're working with our customers to help them through this incredibly volatile time. They're stepping up in so many ways, helping to keep commerce moving, and keep people safe. I have the pleasure of speaking with a number of CEOs running businesses in a variety of industries, hearing their personal stories about the challenges they're facing, and some of the very innovative ways that they've adapted, and in some ways, even thrived in these uncertain times. Joining me today is Craig Parsons, owner and CEO of Palmer Johnson power systems, a company that services and distributes equipment for the off highway industry. Greg, it's Dave Casper, how are you?

CRAIG PARSONS: Hello, this is Craig Parsons. I'm doing well. Thanks. How are you, Dave?

DAVE CASPER: I'm excellent. Maybe describe your business a little bit.

CRAIG PARSONS: Thanks for having me. Sure. Palmer jobs power systems are a spin off of Palmer Johnson, which was based in northeastern Wisconsin, and turned 100 years old a couple years back-through the pandemic, we've been pretty lucky, actually our businesses is definitely going to impacted we're down in the 40% neighborhood. But it could be way worse. Most of the industries we serve are deemed essential. So our business which really exists to support those markets also qualifies as essential.

DAVE CASPER: Being down 40% is a big deal. But given the industries you're serving, and kind of impressed, you're only down 40%. So when you're down 40%, I guess it does give you the opportunity to think about some other businesses. So you recently stepped up in a big way with one of Madison's local hospitals in Madison, Wisconsin. So tell us a little bit about what Palmer did crank and specifically what you did to support the fight against COVID-19 with this hospital.

CRAIG PARSONS: Sure. Full disclosure, my wife is a crna, which is certified registered nurse anesthetist, basically part of the anesthesia team at a local hospital St. Mary's Hospital and Madison, and crna is our COVID-19 treatment are basically as frontline as it gets. Their job is to manage Airways, and COVID-19 is primarily a respiratory disease. So they're definitely right in the middle of it. They're the ones that take in patients on and off of ventilators, for instance, and especially when the patient is taken

off of the ventilator, they can experience extreme coughing spells, which is a perfect opportunity for the disease to spread. So I got asked along the way by one of my wife's crna co workers, I knew anybody, anyone who could make an acrylic intubation box, basically, it's a clear acrylic box that sits over the patient's head with two arm holes that the anesthesiologist or CRNA would use to intubate or activate their patient. The design was out there on the internet, it was an open source design, which was first shared by a doctor from Taiwan and was specifically introduced to shield the anesthesiologists and CRNAs from to fight this disease. So I honestly didn't have a clue if we could make these it's not really up our alley. But we do have one of our core strengths is our engineering team, which actually just at the beginning of this year was we spun out of Palmer Johnson power systems into a separate company, now known as Trident engineers solutions, and and they just jumped at it. So not only are they a team of engineers, they also have a fabrication center with machines to basically can make anything that you throw at them. We ultimately made eight of these incubation boxes, which were donated to St. Mary's Hospital in three locations. They had a prototype ready in a couple days and tweaked that prototype just a little bit and then had about a total 8 boxes done within about a week. So so it all happened really quickly.

DAVE CASPER: You've obviously got a great culture there that people would do that and step up. And I have heard that you would also recently been recognized as one of the top workplaces in Madison. I'd be really interested Craig a little bit on what what approach Do you have and it's hard to get that it's hard to shape the corporate culture. So I'd really been interested in your thoughts on that and your people and how you it's a big deal when you get to be the top workplace and especially in a place like Madison, so I'd love your thoughts on it.

CRAIG PARSONS: Let's say we truly do run Palmer Johnson as a culture first company, our number one core values that we care about each other. The all the decisions that we make, both when things are going well and like in times like this, so Made with our people in mind, we've really worked hard to get this right over the last decade. And with us innovation boxes, another one of our core values is, is that we give back. Basically, we live by our core values, and it makes those types of decisions, it's really a great guide, both for the throw those tough decisions and that we've had to make. So for us, helping our people through the pandemic was the basis for our decisions. So basically, our leadership team that was involved in making these decisions, our guiding principle was to keep a paycheck coming to everybody and to keep everyone insured, health insurance. And then another thing we, because of the nature of our work, roughly half of our employees are in the office. The other half are mechanics in the shop and warehouse workers. So basically, we have half of our people who are sheltering work working from home, like myself and half that aren't. So the half that aren't that are, you know, showing up for work every day, we're trying to do everything we can keep them safe, keep them healthy. And to remind him how much we appreciate them.

DAVE CASPER: Craig, you're a great inspiration, because he's exactly the type of clients we have across all of our businesses, whether their business is up or down. Their attitude and their optimism has

been fantastic. So really appreciate the fact that you're working as hard as you are to keep your your employees focused, giving them an opportunity to be proud of what you've done with the incubators, and also just keeping everybody employed. It's been great. It's a great story, so I can't thank you enough for sharing it.

CRAIG PARSONS: Well, thank you. Thanks for taking the time to talk and appreciate it. It's been a great partner Ross.

DAVE CASPER: Hey, Craig. Thanks so much. Thanks for listening to growing the good. I hope you'll join me again for another conversation and tell them stay safe.