



five questions with... Rick Maples

article by Susan Souder • photo by Steve Vorderman

Rick Maples is founder, co-owner with his wife Dorian, and CEO of Home Nursing Services, a licensed home health agency and a sister company of Angel Corps, First Call Medical Staffing and Dorian Maples & Associates. The companies provide in-home medical and personal care for aging adults and persons with disabilities in northeast Indiana.

Maples started his career as a Navy submarine officer and then worked as a CPA in public practice. He never imagined that 20 years later, in the mid-1990s, he would be involved in an industry that would grab his heart and never let go—home health care.

Q¹ How did you become involved in home health care?

First, the drudgery of the tax season was killing me. Second, I wanted to do something more fulfilling and socially redeeming (classic mid-life crisis). And lastly, in 1995, home health care seemed like a business of the future with a growing demand. It looked like an exciting business challenge. At its core is the mission of helping people.

Q² What has been your company's biggest challenge?

As with most startups, it was survival. In the beginning, we were undercapitalized and cash was running out. Then we caught a big break. In 1998, Visiting Nurse Service downsized, and we were asked to take over a segment of its business. We doubled our revenue, lost our toughest competitor and gained many quality nurses and caregivers all at once.

The biggest ongoing challenge is recruiting, training and retaining quality caregivers as we continue to grow. Since the beginning, we have emphasized human resources.

Q³ What has surprised you most about this business?

The whole relationship with and responsibility to the employees was a big surprise to me. While we have more than 400 clients, we have approximately 300 employees who have needs of their own. Because they work in many locations throughout northeast Indiana and at all hours of the day and night, we have to make a special effort to get to know them and help them get to know each other. It's been a big challenge but an unexpected source of fulfillment. They are extraordinary people with a passion for caring for others. We have learned (and I give Dorian most of the credit for this) to work as hard as we can to create a bond among the caregivers by getting to know

them, showing a genuine interest in their lives, and helping them when we can. It's not something that you can fake.

Q⁴ What have you done to enhance your customer service?

We have a goal: "to enrich the lives of our clients and employees."

We try to provide opportunities and training that exceed the minimum requirements. Most of our administrative staff members are former caregivers who we promoted from the field. Each direct-care employee receives dementia training and CPR for healthcare providers, neither of which is required. This past year, we developed a course with a chef to teach culinary arts for home caregivers. In fact, we're remodeling our executive conference room and installing a teaching kitchen to teach basic things like nutrition, food safety, special diets, etc. It has created additional job fulfillment for these employees and improved client service. We also know that our employees will take what they have learned home so that their families will be healthier as a result.

Q⁵ You own these businesses with your wife, Dorian. What makes a successful business partnership with your spouse?

While this may not apply to all husband-wife teams, it has been important to our success that we bring different, but equally important, skills and experiences to these businesses. Dorian is a skilled and experienced Registered Nurse. At the same time, she is an effective manager with a creative mind. As a CPA, I have a broad background in business, with specific experience in accounting and finance. We can make essential contributions to the business without stepping on each other's toes. We both have an entrepreneurial spirit and are not afraid to fail. We respect each other's ideas and opinions and forgive each other's mistakes. **BP**