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SPECIAL REPORT SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS

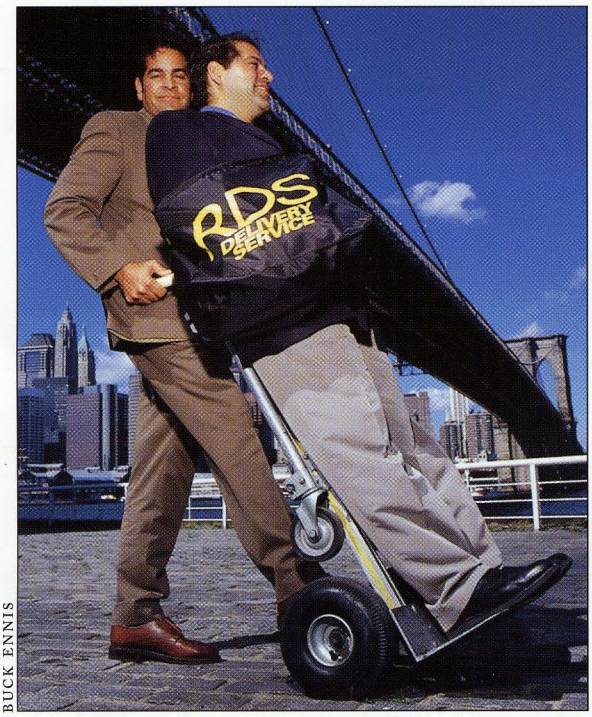
Messengers find best medicine

FACED WITH THE PROBLEM OF TREMENDOUS STAFF TURNOVER, Larry Zogby and his brothers, Mitchell III and David, came up with a daring solution. They decided that they would go out of their way to seek out and hire mentally and emotionally disabled workers.

It worked. People with disabilities account for half of the 100 employees at the Zogbys' Manhattan-based company, RDS Delivery Service. Furthermore, while the average messenger used to stick around for three or four months, the company now has much more loyal employees.

"Once they get comfortable, we have them for at least a year," says David Zogby, 33, who serves as the treasurer of RDS. Larry, 35, is president, and Mitchell, 39, is vice president.

Clients, too, are pleased. "The quality of their work hasn't diminished one bit because of hiring the disabled," says Mary Batista, operations manager of Radiology Associates of Mount Sinai Hospital, a customer for 10 years. "They have an excellent record with us."



BUCK ENNIS

The plan to hire the disabled was just one in a string of successes put together by the brothers Zogby since Larry and David purchased the next-day delivery service from their father in 1986. The first thing they did was move the $150,000-a-year business from its old base in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, to Manhattan, where they began to deliver packages for the medical community.

Soon, the Zogbys began offering same-day delivery in response to customer requests. Today, the firm—now highly computerized—also provides storage for medical records, mail room management for building owners, and even temporary employees to handle filing and errands. The Zogbys forecast revenues of $2.3 million this calendar year, up from $1.1 million five years ago. "Our people make the difference," says Larry Zogby.

Their experience with disabled workers has so impressed the Zogbys that Larry now addresses local business groups on the merits of hiring the disabled. He has also become a member of the Business Advisory Council of the Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service, a nonprofit agency that runs job-readiness programs for the disabled.

—CARA S. TRAGER

DAVID (LEFT) AND LARRY ZOGBY: Hiring the disabled pays off.

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