



Manufacturer, Retailer, Wholesaler: Keeping Ink and Toner Green In-house



Michael (Mike) Concannon: Owner/Founder of Ink & Toner Solutions

Chamber of Commerce and contends without the Chamber he would at best be a small retail operation with only himself and possibly part time help. He now has four full time employees and three part-time in addition to himself. He is likely to hire two or three more full time employees in the next six months. He had started in a 1200 square foot retail location. After about 7 months he doubled into 2400 square feet. At his 13th month he added a much needed 9000 square foot office and manufacturing facility across town from the retail store.

Approximately 20% of his business is retail, 70% commercial, and 10% wholesale to other stores around the US. His commercial sales has exploded in this tough economy. His success has been a mix of hard work, right people, great customer service, full warranty, current economy, and most important quality of his products. They are very unique in this industry and do

When the import and export of products from foreign countries reap high demand from our US economy, Ink and Toner Solutions of Asheboro sets a mark of distinction all its own and keeps the business in-house.

Southern Hospitality recently sat down with Asheboro business owner Michael (Mike) Concannon. The 37 year old with wife of 18 years, Tina and a son, Christopher who is 13 was born in Asheboro and raised in Franklinville in Eastern Randolph County. He left a career in Law Enforcement having reached the rank of Chief of Police in the Town of Candor in Montgomery County and is currently a Reserve Deputy at the Montgomery County Sheriffs Office to maintain a relationship with his previous career.

He started his business on June 4, 2007 after about a 9 month exploratory period in what he wanted to do for a business. He started as a licensee under the Ink Solution program. They were based out

of Florida and then moved to Charlotte before they discontinued their licensee program to go full franchise. Mike elected to change the name and be completely independent as opposed to being a franchise.

He changed my name to Ink & Toner Solutions in March of 2008, having started with only his son helping part time in the summer of 2007. In August he hired his first part time employee who went full time shortly afterward. Mike joined the Asheboro/Randolph Chamber of Commerce before he even opened his doors and immediately joined committees and took advantage of all the Chamber had to offer. Mike contributes to his business success to the networking benefits of the



Retail Store located at 1512-B Zoo Parkway in Asheboro

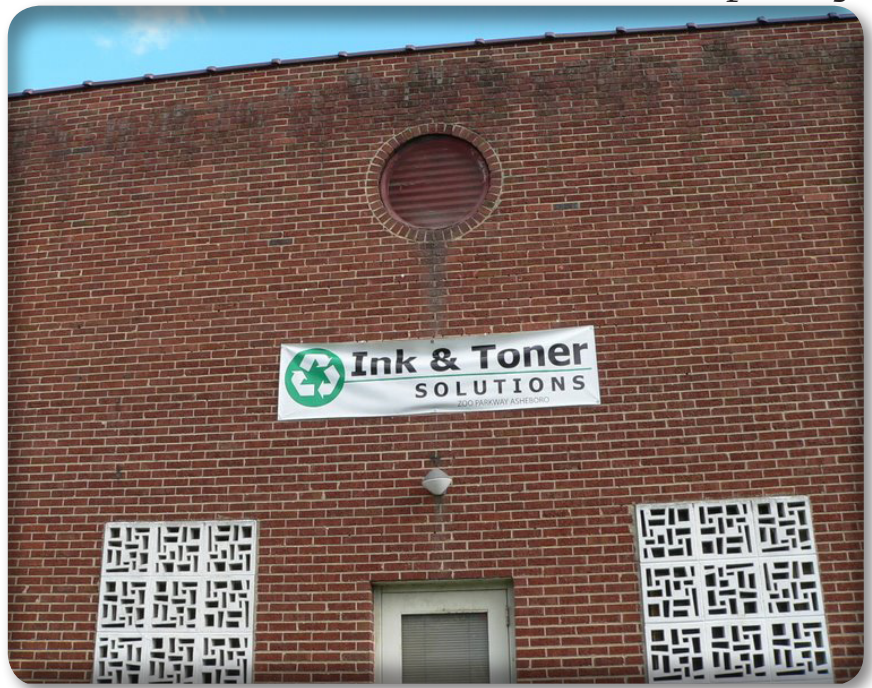
95% or higher of all sales in house. This was a big part of the need to expand. Most in the ink and toner cartridge remanufacturing business outsource products to mainly Chinese companies. These overseas companies buy empty cores and redo them under their very cheap labor and ship them back to the US for resale. Mike has resisted and will continue to resist this trend.

The overseas products are very inconsistent and are the source of the "horror stories" you hear of printers destroyed

and toner leaking into printers. Even if the toner is done correctly it is then subjected to months in boxes on ships, trains, planes, etc. This in addition to being stuck in port in hot humid conditions that toner does not fare well in. He provides local jobs, truly recycles, and controls quality by doing all products in house. He, and his employees, take great pride in their “*remade in the USA*” toner and ink cartridges. Their return rate is well below industry standards. Every cartridge goes through vigorous manual test, electrical test, in addition to a full multi page test in an actual printer. Their growth for the past few months has been averaging around 400% over the same month last year.

All toner cartridges are manually tested and completely disassembled, where all wearable parts are replaced and the cartridge cleaned. After the cartridge is reassembled with new toner and parts it is tested and then packaged. Ink is electronically tested, completely flushed, centrifuged, and filled with a cartridge specific ink. It is then tested upon being filled, and again after a minimum of 48 hours from the first test. This manner of doing the cartridges is truly remanufacturing the cartridges and not refilling them. In fact he considers “refill” a curse word! All this attention to quality and detail sets them well apart from the drill and fill options. They keep thousands of empty cartridges for ink and toner so the customer can have their cartridges on demand without waiting for most common types. This allows them to simply exchange their empty cartridge for a completed tested cartridge. Remanufacturing the cartridges is a standard of high quality business that prioritizes Mike's work ethic with the consumer in mind. Refurbishing his parts and products without compromising or diminishing its benefits is just the beginning of how he keeps “the value” of preserving “the green” marketing of consumer usage that most would consider too time consuming. Their biggest challenge of late has been keeping up with demand and building inventory. The company's reputation of having the largest employers in the area as customers is something to boast about.

Mike states, “We are really blessed in having the right business at the right time. All in addition to doing the right thing, even if small, for our environment. Our customers save from 30-70% off of original new prices with no change in print quality. We have some clients who can save as much as \$500 on a set of all four color cartridges for just one laser printer. Or save as much as \$250



North Asheboro manufacturing office:
1546 N. Fayetteville Street



Pictured above: Store Manager,
Debbie Lewis

on a single monochrome cartridge. Our home user typically saves the same 30-70% off of OEM new pricing. I believe our growth will continue to be strong for a long time to come. We are just starting to touch surrounding counties and the wholesale business to other retail outlets in other states. The business has gone in a completely different direction than my original business plan. We have developed a very solid reputation for quality and service fueling our success. It is exhausting at times keeping it all flowing as we are a manufacturer, retailer, and wholesaler. I could not be happier or more satisfied with where we are this early in this exciting market.”

Mike's humble beginnings is certainly indicative and remains in the humility of his matter-of-fact delivery as he noted the awesome growth and expansion of his business. In the colloquial version of “blowing up” translated as success to the maximum degree is what Southern Hospitality and every business that's linked with Mike, declares without reservation.... We see your rivals moving out to make room for Ink and Toner Solutions, because the competition is not stiff, but the example you set is too steady and too high to match your standards. 