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How this DFW startup went from 'Stayin' Alive' to a multimillion-dollar business

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In the beginning, as with most startups, Mike Muzyka and Jeff Doolin were just happy to get to the next day.

"We'd always have this little saying — the song, *Stayin' Alive* — we'd get that check and boy we'd run that thing to the bank, 'All right, we can write this bill,'" said Doolin, chief operating officer of the company. "We'd be staying alive."

The two founders of Grand Prairie-based LegendZ Way Distribution Solutions stayed alive in those early years by wearing many hats. But now, the two founders related by marriage (the uncle of Muzyka, the chief executive, is Doolin's father-in-law), have built their third-party logistics company to a multimillion-dollar business.

LegendZ Way earned \$2.5 million in revenue last year and is on track to earn \$3.3 million this year. The company recently opened their third facility in DeSoto to compliment its other two in Grand Prairie. The company operates 160,000 square feet of space in their new DeSoto facility and the whole building encompasses 455,000 feet, giving them room to expand.

The company, which has 10 full-time employees, handles a variety of goods from flour and salt to electronics and LED lighting fixtures.

To talk more about their business, Muzyka and Doolin sat down with the *Dallas Business Journal*.

What has surprised you most about running a business?

Doolin: Time management is the biggest thing. We have three locations, so we try and split the time between the three. Perception is very important to me. I don't want people to perceive me as 'Jeff stops in here in the morning and then he's out of the golf course.' I play golf once a year. I suck at it. I don't want that perception of the person who doesn't care.

Muzyka: I think the biggest surprise was how complicated taxes were. I've been on the business side of a couple of companies before — it's just a little bit more when it's your money. It makes a little bit more of an impact when it's coming out of our pockets and coming out of the pockets our families and our employees. That was a little concerning. Coming with the realization of, 'Oh my gosh, we've got to play the franchise tax and the franchise tax is based on our revenue, so when our revenue goes up our franchise tax goes up?'

You said you're self-funded. Do you envision a scenario where you need to take outside capital to grow?



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Chief Operating Officer Jeff Doolin, left, and Chief Executive Michael Muzyka are the founders of the Grand Prairie-based LegendZ Way.

Muzyka: Yes. Part of our long term would be to invest in some land and/or a building. That would also diversify us to have a little bit more control of our destiny. It's the same argument as buying your own house. If you know you're going to be there for a while, the best thing to do is invest in a house so you can have something at the end of 20 years worth of efforts.

I would say, in that case, we would have to go out for capital to finance being part of a group that would make us part of that ownership of the building.

What's the biggest challenge to growth?

Doolin: One of the biggest challenges is the cost of real estate. It's having that capital. If you want to grow to another building, that's one of the biggest right there. As well as labor, the labor pool. You definitely see a difference in the labor pool in DFW. In each one of our locations, we see certain areas where we can find the labor. You can go out and hold a sign that says we're hiring for \$30 an hour, and you get guys that are worth \$5 an hour. I would say those are our two biggest. For me, it's the cost of real estate and your labor pool.

Muzyka: Labor costs have gone up tremendously in the last three years from when we started. So, that's a big concern.

Why did you spell your company name with a 'Z'?

Doolin: The 'S' was taken.

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