

Clean sweep: Jaspro offers multi-dimensional service from Liverpool

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by Gayle Wilson





Barry Tomalin, president of Jaspro Services Ltd., says the business as it is now started with a “tiny, little landscape company.”

By GAYLE WILSON

The caricature of a little man in a green uniform and cap has become synonymous with Jaspro Cleaning Services Ltd., which is based at the Port Mersey Commercial Park in Brooklyn.

However, as an owner of the company, Barry Tomalin stands in stark contrast to its logo.

At over six feet tall, Tomalin is suave and wears a suit. Still, though the green cap is nowhere to be seen in his oak-lined office in the former Bowater building, he does wear a number of proverbial hats.

He has to. Jaspro, which Tomalin co-owns along with his wife, Noreen Page, offers a spectrum of services. With 35 employees, it provides customers with everything from grass cutting to asbestos removal, commercial maintenance and cleaning to industrial cleaning products, and furniture moving to cottage care.

Cap or no cap, it's a business model Tomalin has carefully designed, spurred on by the advice of a prolific local businessman.

"Barry, you've moved into a tiny town from Calgary. And let me give you some advice," Tomalin says he was told. "You'll never make money doing one thing in this town."

Tomalin recalls the businessman telling him, "Just do 10 little companies."

While he says he's not running 10 companies, "We're doing 10 little things to make the company operate."

Hailing from Calgary, where he says he bought and sold a series of companies, Tomalin moved to Liverpool, Page's home town, a decade ago.

Admitting he had already retired "three or four times," he says retirement didn't sit well this time either. So he started dabbling in business again.

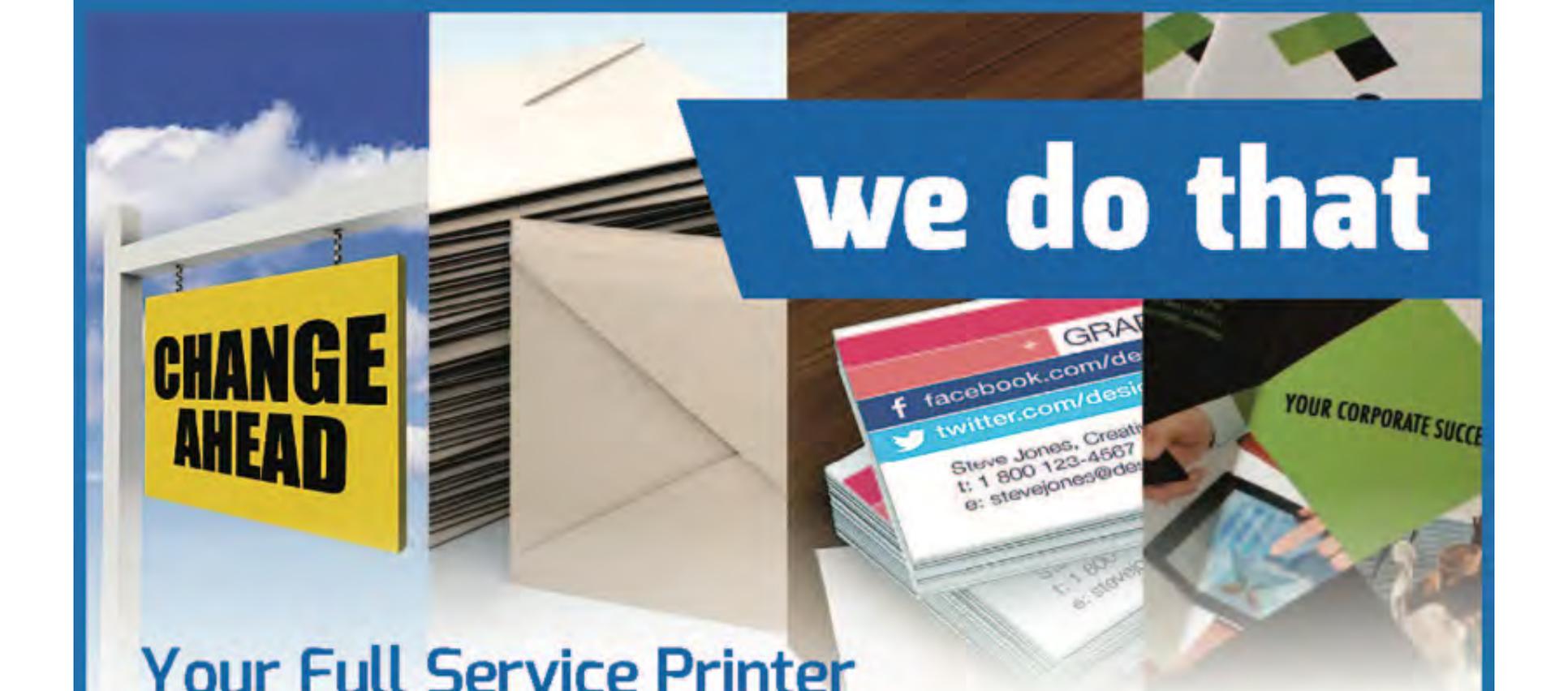
Tomalin bought a "tiny, little landscape company" named D and B Services, and went on to purchase two more small enterprises, Jaspro Cleaning and Speedy Cleaning.

"And if you want challenges, we had three bank accounts, three accounts payables, three accounts receivables. And the business started to grow."

It wasn't long before Tomalin decided to put some order to the operation.

In contrast to home-based businesses, "I come from the other side of the world where you have offices and structure," Tomalin told LighthouseNOW.

"I always wanted and always had corporations. So I began turning them into corporations. " He established formal accounting, sales and administration systems.



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"And that's how you grow businesses. You do it with structure," he emphasizes.

Tomalin bought the building at 3675 Highway 3, and consolidated the businesses there under the corporation Jaspro Services Ltd.

Over time, vehicles and equipment came on board to expand the offerings to include such services as snow removal and home and commercial moves.

"We added a lot of things to the pot and stirred it."

About two years ago, Jaspro won what Tomalin calls a "significant contract" with Nova Scotia Lands to provide property and building maintenance for its Port Mersey Commercial Park. That prompted Jaspro's move into its new offices and warehouse space in the old Bowater building.

"That changed the company. It made us grow up," says Tomalin.

"What we needed was Red Seal plumbers, electricians, welders, crane operators."

Then came the opportunity to provide even more services, including asbestos, lead paint and mold removal.

"We said, 'What the heck. Let's start another company.'" So Tomalin started Jaspro Environmental Services.

That prompted another leap in maturity. "Because we needed certification. We needed training."

While the company was growing, Tomalin kept things in perspective. He knew Jaspro would never be able to compete with "the big guys" in Halifax and elsewhere looking after major commercial buildings, or be a company to just offer one service.

"In Liverpool, we don't have 10 moves a week. I mean, we're having two and three moves a week," he says for example.

Jaspro's strategy is to offer a variety of services and "cross-train" its employees, so each can provide more than one service.

"It's not unusual for us to have about seven pay scales for our staff," says Tomalin. So an employee might be welding for a higher rate during the week while cutting grass at a lower one on the weekend.

"And that's probably how you're going to run this business in the future. Not based on becoming the largest moving company in Queens. Because it just won't happen."

Instead, Jaspro's employees are wearing a number of hats as well.

And they're doing it in company style. As well as hats, staff have Jaspro uniforms, shirts, and winter and summer jackets.

"I like to see my staff, male or female, go out dressed in a Jaspro shirt," says Tomalin. "It just supports the argument that we're professionals."

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