

'This Was Going to be a Very Short-Term Job'

ACA member Mickey Putman shares his accounts receivable management industry leadership journey.

After high school, Mickey Putman was offered a job at Central Professional Services, where he planned to work while he figured out his career. It didn't take long to learn he had found it; he's now the company president. Here's how he got his start in the accounts receivable management (ARM) industry, in his own words.

I graduated from high school in 1992 and was offered a collector position at Central Professional Services in Cadillac, Michigan.

My family moved to Cadillac in 1983, when I was 9 years old, and I have been here ever since.

I didn't know what I wanted to do after high school, so I took this job while I tried to figure out my career going forward. This was going to be a very short-term job when I started.

I realized very quickly that I liked it. I enjoyed speaking with people.

About six months after I started my job, the collection floor manager left, creating an opening in that position. Instead of replacing the collection floor manager, they let all the collectors work together. We drew up policies and procedures as a team and set goals.

A few years later, the owner of the company retired and sold the agency. I moved into the general manager position and ran our legal department, collection floor and IT team. I enjoyed it so much.

I worked under our second owner, Bill, for about 20 years. One day, Bill came to me and said he wanted to sell the business and retire. I said, "I'm your guy." My goal was to own the agency, and six years ago I purchased it from Bill.

No one in my family ever worked in this industry, but it didn't take me very long to realize it's a great job. I learned that if I

can make more phone calls every day, I can make more commissions. It was a lot of hard work.

After starting to work at Central Professional Services, I chose not to go to college. I knew if I moved away from home and was left to do what I wanted to do, I may not have made the best choices and would end up with student loan debt. When my friends were at school, I would go visit them on the weekends. I had a college experience that way, but it was always work for me first.

While I never worked in the ARM industry before coming to Central Professional Services, my experience working at a sporting goods store in high school showed me that I excelled at customer service.

I stay in this industry and with Central Professional Services because we are a team. We work together to learn how to have successful calls and share ideas. As a younger person, it was a great job. As I got older, I learned I could make this my career and never have to leave.

My parents both passed away when I was very young, and I have three siblings. I was always taking care of my siblings and this job allowed me to do that.

My relationships with members of the Michigan Association of Collection Agencies (MACA) are also why I stay in the industry. MACA is like another family to me, even though we're all competitors. Their willingness to help is irreplaceable.

I also stay in this industry because it allows me to volunteer and give back to my community. We focus on projects that allow families to have places to go and spend time together no cost, such as playgrounds. I've been able to volunteer my time and donate money to these organizations that help children, such as the local hospital and the school athletics program. That's rewarding for me. There is a lot of stigma about the



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collection industry, but there is another side to what we do.

I've told many people if you want to work and school is not your choice, you can do very, very well in the ARM industry. I think it's one of those industries we need to teach people about. ▣

Reported by Katy Zillmer.