



At a glance:

Title: President, Facility Logistic Services
Age: 45
Education: Studied business management, N.C. A&T State University
Family: Wife, Deborah; son Darrell Jr., 22; daughter Danielle, 18

Up close: Darrell McNeill

April 6, 2012, Triad Business Journal

LEXINGTON - Facility Logistic Services has acted as a third-party manufacturing, distribution and warehousing provider for Kimberly-Clark Corp., a personal health care products company, since 2007. FLS has grown from 22 employees to more than 320 workers spanning three locations — Hendersonville, Lexington and Neenah, Wisc. — since Darrell McNeill became president in 2007.

Up until recently, FLS has been exclusive to Kimberly-Clark, but McNeill is now looking to establish at least two additional contract relationships with local industries by the end of the year, a move which could result in additional hires.

How did you get started in warehouse and distribution management?

Logistics is what I know. Back in 1988 I started at Sears Logistics Services in Greensboro as a quality control and refurbishment operator for the catalog division, which no longer exists. I saw that ship sinking, and when we started taking on water, I jumped. Then I had the opportunity to take a leadership position at Kmart's Greensboro distribution center. I had moved from an hourly team leader to an operations manager.

What brought you to Lexington?

I was recruited to Lexington as a general manager to Standard Corp. out of Columbia, S.C. which was a third-party labor provider for Kimberly-Clark, and that's how I got my start here. We only had 22 employees at the time. All we did was warehousing. Standard Corp's contract ran for three years, then RCS International came in for three years, then Steward Solutions was in for three years.

Describe the transition from Steward Solutions to FLS Logistics.

In 2007, Kimberly-Clark was going to let Steward Solutions' contract expire. But before then, they approached me and asked me to take over as president. To me, it was overwhelming. I thought about the financial factor, because I had never done anything other than paying bills in my house. To do things like workers' compensation and taxes and the legal aspects was daunting.

What was the biggest challenge in your transition to president of FLS?

I never thought I would be managing warehouse labor distribution and manufacturing. That's the toughest thing — going from Darrell the Operations Manager to Darrell the President. I'm a people-oriented person, and my biggest fear was the financial side.

Did you have a mentor to guide you through the process?

I had been doing business with a friend, Ed Weaver, for years. He was the owner at Innovative Management Systems in Winston-Salem, which was one of my contractors. I approached him and said, this is what's been put in front of me. I really want to do it, and I know I can do it with your support. He said, 'let's do it; I'm with you all the way: He's been my mentor since 2005, and now he's my business partner. He's the secretary/treasurer at FLS.

What has the company done under your tenure?

Kimberly-Clark asked me to keep our contract exclusive, which is what I wanted to do through the transition period. Since I took over in 2007, we grew from 22 employees to more than 320. We have three operations in two states. We originally started just in warehousing, but now we're in every facet of Kimberly-Clark's operations — from the manufacturing floors, their raling silos, their supply offices, their inventory. We run every aspect of the supply chain.

And now you're looking to grow?

We're taking this leap to offer our services to others. We just got the website up a few months ago. We have no new clients on the books, but a few contracts in the works and some bid proposals we're looking over. Our goal is to have a minimum of two more contract relationships by the end of this year. We've identified two sites in the Triad we're interested in, to keep our focus local.

Are you looking to hire additional workers?

Absolutely. We're not sure how many. We're not quite sure which areas that our customers will want us to move into. For example. one bid we have now just requests 10 employees on their warehousing side. But another operation has 150 employees needed.

How can a third-party management provider help lower costs?

Your labor costs for us are going to be much cheaper than what it is for your folks, because their wages, the benefits they have, and the taxes on those, are expensive. We're saving Kimberly-Clark now in excess of \$20,000 a year. If it was to use the number of employees that we use at their loaded weight, it would be very expensive. That's why this movement has come in.

How can FLS help streamline a company's supply chain?

Most companies are going to use several different companies to do different parts of the supply chain — manufacturing, storing, shipping, the third party for the centralized transportation. And what we can offer is we can do every single bit of that. It's one-stop shopping. We have the capability and the ability to do it all, under one roof, for one cost.

You established the HEART program — Heightening Employee Awareness and Recognition — at FLS in 2010. Why was that important to you?

Here in Lexington, the unemployment rate is about 10

percent. Our wages aren't the highest. So it was important to me to show our employees that we appreciate them. The HEART team works every day to make sure employees know that they're appreciated.

You've been on the United Way of Davidson County board for the past seven years and had a stint as campaign chairman. Now you're the chairman of the board. Why was that important to you?

I care so much for people, and there are too many people who have special needs. Even when I was a kid, I recognized United Way as one of the biggest names in the community that helped people.

What was your first job as a youth?

Flipping burgers at McDonald's in Hampton, Va. It gave me a sense of responsibility. I had a job, and my friends didn't — but I had money, and my friends didn't.

What's something not many people know about you?

I play the drums. I was an original member of A&T's Cold Steel drumline in 1985.

If you were forced to appear on a reality TV show, which one would you choose?

Oh. that's easy. "Amazing Race." My wife wants to do it and show other couples that you can go through the show and still be happy at the end of it.

