

## A thru Z Document Destruction

Merrie Elsberry's curiosity about how her employer shred documents led to establishing a document destruction business.



Tom and Merrie Elsberry began research at the Small Business Development Center library and put together a business plan in 2002. Unfortunately, after completing this, they were turned down for a business loan by three banks in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and two in Cheyenne, Wyoming. They finally used several credit cards and opened for business in December 2002, and by February 2003 had their first client.

Tom and Merrie had several obstacles to overcome. First, they had to keep their business going until more clients could be found. They tackled this by aggressively marketing their business with postcard mailers, cold calls to businesses, and marketing packets which resulted in seven to eight new clients monthly.

Their next hurdle was equipment purchases. Tom and Merrie's financial situation allowed room for buying an older shredding vehicle, which broke down frequently and interfered with timely document destruction. They resolved this by contacting their clients, explaining the problem, and rescheduling. By emphasizing customer service, Tom and Merrie were able to turn a negative into a positive.

When they needed to hire, they found few people looking for work, applicants with poor work ethic and business skills, and individuals with drug problems. Tom and Merrie solved this problem by contacting friends and relatives for recommendations. They started with three full-time employees, and now employ seven full-time and four part-time employees.



In March 2004, Tom and Merrie were nominated to participate in the Cheyenne New Business Challenge. They submitted their business and marketing plan and won \$30,000 in cash and services from local vendors. For Tom and Merrie, planning and determination paid off.

Tom and Merrie reached out to the community by joining the Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis and Cheyenne Frontier Days. They also volunteer their time on boards, committees, and projects.

For more information you may contact: Tom and Merrie Elsberry in Cheyenne at P.O. Box 20041 Cheyenne, Wyoming 82003, [athruzd@hotmai.com](mailto:athruzd@hotmai.com), the web site at: [www.athruzd.com](http://www.athruzd.com), or telephone them at 307-221-2825.