

GREG WOOD JR. | 37

Vice president, operations. Gage Telephone Systems Inc.

STANDSTILL TRAFFIC is a constant source of frustration for most Baton Rougeans, but Greg Wood Jr. sees it as an opportunity to expand his mind. He pops in an audio book, usually one on business strategy. Recently, it was Jim Collins' bestseller *Good to Great; Why Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*.

"I try to turn it into a positive," Gage says.

Indeed, Gage thrives on self-improvement. He reads constantly, wakes up early to work out, competes in adventure racing, tends a vegetable garden with his wife and two children, and serves as a volunteer coach for his son's football team where he preaches the gospel of sportsmanship. "I really believe that you ought to be doing something every day to improve yourself mentally, spiritually and physically," he says.

Wood has also pushed Gage Telephone Systems, the company his father, Greg Wood Sr., started 32 years ago, to innovate and grow. While earning a degree in business at LSU, Wood started thinking about the company's position in the local market and what could be done to expand its reach.

"My dad had poured the groundwork and built a new industry," says Wood. "At the

time he started it, there weren't any other private companies doing this."

In 1999, when his father was ready to wind down, Wood, along with his sister, Anne Hebert, and brother-in-law, Jason Landry, took over the company's leadership. Since then, Gage Telephone's business has doubled.

"We're reliable, which is really important to our customers, most of whom are small businesses," says Wood. "Whether you're a chemical plant or two phones in a flower shop, we're not going to treat you differently. We're not just selling equipment. We're building a relationship with our clients for the long term."

In 2005 the company added networking and IT services to office telephone systems. And in 2009 Gage created and branded Insite, a service that includes installation, monitoring and management of telecommunication services. It helps companies fix their costs, says Wood.

"If you're not deploying technology that gives you a competitive advantage," he says, "it doesn't make sense."

-M.H.R.

