



October 29, 2008

## Family, staff build strong defense

**Business name:** Brighton Cromwell, LLC  
**Type of business:** Supply chain integrator  
**Owners:** Rob Van Etten, Glenn Van Etten, Don Youker  
**Address:** 111 Canfield Ave, C 1-5; Randolph  
**Phone:** (973) 252-4100  
**Web site:** [www.brightoncromwell.com](http://www.brightoncromwell.com)  
**Hours of operation:** Standard weekday business hours  
**Founded:** 2002

Why did you start the business? My hero growing up was my father, Bill Van Etten. He was a lifetime small-business owner and dedicated community citizen. I dreamed that one day I would be a business owner just like him.

How did the business start? After my father sold his business he started Brighton Cromwell, LLC in 2002 as a consulting firm to help companies get into homeland security. When I graduated college in 2003, I convinced my father that he should start a business with me. He brought me into Brighton Cromwell, LLC and we changed the company's focus and mission to being the leading supply-chain integrator to both the Department of Defense and defense contractors. We brought in my uncle, John Van Etten, and my childhood friend, Don Youker. My brother, Glenn, was brought in the next year.

What adversity did you experience? Eleven months into the business my Uncle John passed away from stomach cancer. Two and a half months later, my father suddenly passed away. My faith and determination were tested, but we never looked at failure as an option. We knew that we were being watched over and that winners never quit. The next year consisted of long hours with my partners, Glenn and Don. I had convinced another good friend, Gabe Albanito, to join the business later that year. We grew the business 100 percent.

How has the business grown over the years? Glenn and I learned a lot of lessons from our father. Like us, he too became an entrepreneur at a young age. My father took over a two-man company, Williams & Watts, from 85-year-old Horace Wellington Watts. In the course of 25 years, he helped transform his company from \$250,000 a year to well over \$100 million a year and 200 employees. My dad was able to do this because his company not only developed fantastic systems, but the company developed wonderful people. We are following the same formula.

We have created a culture that strives for excellence, respects all individuals, and conducts business with uncompromising honesty and integrity. While our system, SEDNA, got us listed as the No. 1 fastest-growing technology company with proprietary technology in New Jersey (by Deloitte), we believe that systems are simply tools for our employees. It is our employees making this company great and grow.

With so much growth, how do you keep perspective and stay on top of it all? A large key to our success has been our outside advisors. Because we are so entrenched in the day-to-day operations of the business, it was good to get an outside perspective. My father's best friend and now a dear friend of mine, Fran Scricco, really helped guide this business, along with the help of people such as Tony Camuso, Ron Rothberg, and Bob Iracane. It is great to learn from other people's experience and avoid as many mistakes as possible. They have all become friends to us.

What makes you most proud of your company? We strive to be a good corporate citizen. The military has been very good to my family and we want to be good to them. We have worked with New Jersey Department of Labor veteran's group and the VA Hospital in Lyons to give jobs to our former military. We are proud that more than 20 percent of our work force is former military and we have a member of every branch of our military working at Brighton Cromwell. In addition, we are proud to have a special-needs employee. The Midland School asked us to step up to this great challenge and we are happy to give back. This world takes all kinds and we are thankful to learn from him.

If you could do it again, what would you do differently? I feel so very fortunate and blessed to spend the last year of my uncle's and father's life, working side by side with them. You will always regret some decisions, but life moves on and there isn't time to dwell on what you could have done. You can only control what you have yet to do and even then things don't always go to plan.

What's the best business advice your parents gave? My father always told me to work to solve your customer's hardest problems and the rest will come easy. My mom always told us to never quit, no matter how bad things appeared to be.

What personality trait helps you the most? Some may say I am very persistent and I have the gift of gab! Honestly I don't believe that one person makes a company great. Our organization is filled with talented people with all different traits. We are a family, and it takes all kinds.

Are you looking to do anything outside of defense? We are very excited about opening up the commercial market. We have created a joint venture with Green Starts Here, LLC to create a full-service offering of "green" products. The company's CEO, Kevin Myers, was college roommates with Glenn and I at the University of Delaware. The beauty of "green" is that you can help the environment and many times save money by reducing energy consumption. In addition, we nearly complete on offering a full-line of commercial fasteners that are shipped from five shipping locations across the country at [www.bclhardware.com](http://www.bclhardware.com). We are offering real-time inventory and same-day shipment on more than 35,000 lines for bulk fasteners buyers 98 percent of the time. We hope to have this complete sometime in November. We specialize in integrated supply chain solutions and would love to work with some of the local New Jersey businesses.

What has changed since you started? When we started the business, Don and Glenn were 22 and I was 23. We were able to work 16-hour days and never take days off. As the company has matured so have we and we had to learn how to work smarter. This was as a result of the women in our lives! Glenn just got married in September to Kristin Monica and I am getting married to the love of my life, Randolph native Liane Fascia, in November. They have taught us the importance of a work-life balance.

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