



CUSTOMER Q & A

JOE'S TV & APPLIANCE

A Leap of Faith Leads to All-Things Service

Highschool sweethearts Joe and Gina Poppema purchased Rod's TV & Appliance from Rod and Celia Heckathorn in 2002. It was a "big leap of faith," remembers Gina. After all, they were only 23 years old. Joe had been working for Rod's in service and installation for a few years while the Poppemas were attending Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. The Heckathorn family had lost their son who was supposed to take over the business, according to Gina.

"It was an honor when Rod approached my husband to buy the store, but it was a hard decision because we were so young," said Gina. "We started dating at 16, married at 21 and bought the business at 23."

It was Joe's love of the appliance industry and people that inspired him to take the leap into business ownership. Rod's TV & Appliance had a great following and a good reputation, remembers Gina. "Rod was well known in the community for his integrity and we wanted to honor him." So, for seven years, the Poppemas didn't change the name of the business.

In 2009, Joe and Gina celebrated a ribbon cutting for Joe's TV & Appliance—not only a new, larger location in Orange City, Iowa, but also a new name to reflect Joe at the helm. The new showroom was triple the size of the original location. As brands were added and the business grew, Joe remained committed to service, hiring two fulltime service technicians, allowing him to remain in the store to work directly with customers.

Today, the Poppemas have three children and employ a staff of 13 fulltime and part-time employees, which includes service and install techs, a service manager and sales associates. Three install techs are cross-trained to assist with sales; Joe and Gina wear all hats. Here, Gina shares their journey thus far and their experience as a new Retailer Web Services (RWS) customer.



Joe's TV & Appliance

LOCATION:
Orange City, Iowa

FOUNDED:
2002

OWNERS:
Joe and Gina Poppema

WEBSITE:
joestvandappliance.com



(L to R) Joe and Gina Poppema

“...we decided to sign on RWS as if hiring an expert in the field. It was well worth the investment.”

GINA POPPEMA

Q: Set the stage in terms of your store's location in rural Iowa and customer base.

Gina Poppema (GP): Orange City is in the northwest corner of Iowa. Our town is approximately 6,000 people and we're surrounded by many small towns with Sioux City south of us and Sioux Falls, S.D., north of us. We're blessed to be in a prosperous community with low unemployment; people are tied to agriculture in some way, wise with their money and have a strong work ethic. Like us, they're running their own businesses.

Q: As an independent owner, what changes have you seen in the TV and appliance business?

GP: TVs have come full circle. We were part of the excitement with flat screens, and now there are so many more avenues to purchase them. The role we play is helping customers who want full-service installation.

With appliances, the quality of the product across most brands has gone down. Challenges are faced by most customers, and we have the technicians to service their problems.

Our competitive advantage at Joe's TV & Appliance is definitely service, hands down. We're there for all the little things.

Q: When did you start working with RWS? What made you decide to give them a try?

GP: It's been a few short months. I went to Nationwide's PrimeTime in August (2018) and attended a training by Jennie. (RWS COO Jennie Gilbert). Afterwards, I talked to Adam (Senior Sales Executive Adam Gilbert) about my frustrations, pricing being No. 1. Pricing began the conversation, which eventually led to digital marketing.

Vendor pricing, MAP, discounts, etc. are changing weekly, sometimes daily. I love working in spreadsheets, but still couldn't keep it all straight. It was so confusing. I would spend hours not finding the answer I was looking for.

On the digital marketing front, I had spent a lot of time trying to learn everything because I enjoy it. I hired part-time gals, including a college intern to assist me, but it became too much. I'm out of time.

Instead of staffing and always starting over with an intern, we decided to sign on RWS as if hiring an expert in the field. It was well worth the investment.

Q: Are you using RWS' complete digital suite?

GP: Yes. With the launch of our Level 4 site (joestvandappliance.com) in December, we began using the WebFronts® app to control it. It's a day-to-day useful tool that takes several different types of data and creates a pricing formula that works for us automatically. You can set your prices to MAP, MSRP, etc. and RetailDeck's® Market Watch settings alert you when there are changes. There are 300 pieces on our floor and over 4,000 pieces on our website. We're working on perfecting our formula, but I believe in this product.

We use RetailDeck as our day-to-day price tag program. I had my onboarding call for WebFronts Review™ recently, and I'm figuring out how to get our customers to leave reviews about us on sites like Google, Facebook and Yelp. I appreciate this program.

AdRocket™ Boost is my favorite piece of the puzzle! We've been doing mainly Google Text, Display and retargeting (also called remarketing) since January, and I see a lot of potential. I have had a fantastic experience working with Skylar Ellington, who monitors our ads and calls me with changes, and Rene Hernandez, who manages our website. I really appreciate how they have worked together to always find a solution.

Q: As a new RWS customer, how would you describe your experience so far?

GP: RWS has hired and developed such a great team! It truly provides for brainstorming. Skylar and Rene have both gone above and beyond to coordinate with each other, making my RWS-AdRocket-WebFronts experience seamless. I cannot tell you how much that helps me—it allows me to go help customers instead of sitting at a computer trying to coordinate images and/or advertising!

At PrimeTime, I send other dealers the way of RWS. I encourage other dealers to look at how much time they're spending each week on digital marketing. We're already wearing many hats. Do you want to spend time on digital marketing or be with your customers?



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