Business Person of the Year
William 'Kip' Schumacher, M.D.
Acadiana Emergency Room Physician and Health Care Visionary

In 1994, while serving as director of Emergency Services at Opelousas General Hospital, Dr. William 'Kip' Schumacher decided to establish a new and innovative health care organization that would transform the delivery of emergency medical services nationwide.

He named his new company The Schumacher Group. Schumacher's unique business plan included building an efficient, comprehensive emergency room that would address all aspects of emergency room care, creating a smooth emergency medical care experience for the patient, physician, and medical staff.

Today, Schumacher says his company's ongoing objective is to "create an emergency room team dynamic that is responsible for world class quality care in the emergency room from the physician, to nurses, ward clerks, lab techs, to billing, insurance and client relations personnel."

"We ensure a continuous flow of service. Without this team dynamic, the quality of care is reduced," Schumacher explains.

According to Schumacher, The group's mission is "to provide consistently improving quality health care to all patients in a cost effective manner and to maintain the highest ethical standards by upholding the patient's rights and treating them with dignity and respect."

"When we entered this company," Schumacher continues, "our emergency room team approach was a new way on what other emergency care operations were doing."

The physician continues to expand the scope and reach of his business by investing in innovative ways to practice better medicine — not only in the emergency room, but also in what is known as hospital culture. Schumacher's organization searches for new ways to cover a higher level of service in all of the hospitals where its independent contractor physicians are based and implement new programs to improve customer service. His employees are continually working with emergency nurses to improve customer service.

Gary Reeder, The Schumacher Group's executive vice president and former CEO of Opelousas General Hospital, says it's a creative partner. "Kip's energy and his vision is what continues to drive this company toward our objectives. We're influencing how emergency medicine is delivered. Out 1,200 doctors will see 5.7 million patients this year in 17 states throughout the south from Virginia to New Mexico."

"It's a good morning, and a bright mind," Reeder adds. "That's why I decided to work with him. I like a really good job with a great salary to come back here to work with Kip because I knew two things: Nobody would outwork you, and nobody would outsmart you."

"Kip," Reeder says when he started practicing medicine 20 years ago, "emergency care was a relatively new specialty. It was during his early years at Opelousas General Hospital that he learned how to listen to and treat the dignity of his patients. He credits much of his success during the time to Karen Reynolds, a senior emergency room nurse at the hospital.

"In the emergency room," says Schumacher, "things get so hectic and chaotic, and standards of expectation are so high, that physicians and nurses quite often don't take the time to really listen to the patient, so they under treat and are not known to treat. People want their doctor to listen. This gives patients the feeling they are important."

After Reynolds retired, Schumacher talked to her about her new business on a part-time basis, but before long she was a full-time employee and eventually moved into her current assignment as senior vice president of patient services.

In 1997, Schumacher formed another organization, the Emergency Department Practice and Management Association, which was named to improve federal and state regulatory standards for health care quality in the United States. He wanted to find a way to address health care issues nationwide by organizing a government standards and procedures watch group. He says with a sense of pride, "Today, all of my major competitors are members."

Cliff Schumacher, a recent Loyola Law School graduate, explains his father's success this way: "He has enthusiasm that's infectious. He has an ability to get people excited about his cause because he truly believes in it. And equally important is his persistence. He's told me often, 'to be successful in business you have to be prepared to hear 'no' a thousand times before you hear one yes.' His enthusiasm and persistence is what has gotten him where he is today."

Dr. William 'Kip' Schumacher has realized his business objective to help transform the delivery of emergency medical services nationwide, and although he has achieved a high level of success, Schumacher will tell you he's just getting started.