

Avalon Copy Centers looks to grow in Mohawk Valley

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UTICA - For five years, the Utica location of Syracuse based Avalon Copy Centers has been delivering copies and cookies to the Mohawk Valley market.

Now managing partner Daniel Gerling is hoping to continue the center's growth trend in order to offer more services to more customers in the region.

Avalon Copy Centers, which delivers a bag of freshbaked cookies with each order, was founded in 2000 by Jonathan R. Denney, CEO, and opened in Utica in 2002. For several years, the company's core business has been copying legal documents, but has since branched out. This is especially true in the Utica office, says Gerling.

"We've gotten into more of a diverse clientele," he says. Legal copying, in fact, is not the company's largest segment. It has been surpassed by the building/construction industry.

"There has been a lot of building going on," Gerling says. Projects such as the city's Hope VI low-income housing project and the emergency room renovations at St. Elizabeth Medical Center have resulted in brisk business for Avalon.

The company's ability to make copies up to 36 inches wide and as many feet long as necessary has proven popular with area architects and engineers, he says. At 35 percent of its total business, the work Avalon does for the building/construction industry is the largest segment of business in Utica.

But the company has also seen increased interest in printing work, particular short run jobs (5,000 or fewer items) that would be too costly at a traditional printer, Gerling says. With digital equipment, Avalon can provide print-quality invitations, brochures, booklets, calendars, and other items for short printing runs.

Even branching out into some graphic-design work such as creating business cards or other printed items has helped Avalon grow locally, Gerling says.

"Once we've established a client, we can normally help them with everything" he notes.

Avalon's Utica office runs about 120 jobs a month and has about 150 clients. Sales in 2006 were \$250,000, a number Gerling wants to increase by 10 percent in 2007.

Another goal for 2007 is to add at least one more employee to the current two-person operation, he says. Gerling is joined in Utica by Production Manager Richard Rogers.

"We've built the business to ... where it needs to have a customer-service representative," Gerling says. Currently, Gerling spends time on the road delivering orders just as much as he does going out trying to gain new customers. Hiring a customerservice representative to take over those delivery duties will free Gerling up for sales efforts.

"It's growing on its own," he says of the company's customer base. Word-of-mouth is one of the main ways new clients discover

Avalon, but more sales time will help grow company even faster, Gerling says.

Avalon Copy Centers is based at 901 N. State St. in Syracuse and also has a location in Rochester. The company has 90 full- and part-time employees and generated sales just over \$3 million in 2006.

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