

THE CENTRAL NEW YORK

BUSINESS JOURNAL

Ambitious move for Avalon

Copy Center triples space in move to State Street

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SYRACUSE — Avalon Copy Centers is moving to a new, larger facility.

The 5-year-old company is going from its 4,000-square-foot offices at 500 Erie Blvd. West to a 13,000-square-foot space at 901 N. State St., the former location of furniture retailer The Room Source, which is now out of business.

Avalon should close on the building purchase, now owned by R&D of DeWitt, LLC, this month or in March, says Jonathan R. Denney, president. He says he can't discuss financial details of the transaction yet because the deal has not been completed. Denney hopes to move his company into its new home by April.

Avalon, which employs 40 at its Erie Blvd. location, provides copying and document-production services for businesses throughout the Syracuse and Mohawk Valley regions. It has an office in Utica, and also several employees who travel as far as Pennsylvania to perform on-site document scanning for hospitals and other medical facilities.

"Believe it or not, I have employees I haven't even met," Denney says.

The company has grown to a total of 60 workers after starting with three in 2000. The current offices are too cramped.

"We have filled just about every crack here as much as possible," Denney says. "This will allow for

our continued growth."

Before the move, Denney is renovating the new building. The space is wide open because it had been used as a showroom when The Room Source was there, Denney says.

"Right now, there's painter's tape where walls are going to be," he says. "Instead of working with existing electrical, water fountains, and toilets, we can design it ourselves to maximize efficiency."

Growth at Avalon is being driven by the company's service, which Denney believes is a step above any competitor's. The company is on-call 24 hours, seven days a week for its clients and features free pickup of originals and delivery of finished documents.

"No one else is doing this 24/7," Denney says. "It's very unique. We'll go and pick up jobs in the middle of the night. No one else is doing that."

The company also focuses on ensuring confidentiality of clients' documents. The office is not open to walk-in business, and all employees sign non-disclosure agreements.

Employees also hand-check for accuracy every copy that Avalon produces, Denney says.

"We're not Kinko's. We're not Campus Copy. We could do that. We could hang a sign outside and compete with them," he says. "But that doesn't really fit with our work flow. We're all business-to-business."

The largest piece of Avalon's business, about 30 to 40 percent, comes from law firms, which often need



Denney

thousands of pages of copies for a single court case. Demand from some of those clients prompted Avalon to start a document-scanning division about a year ago.

The division and its high-speed scanning equipment is another big reason for the new building, Denney says. Avalon spent about \$100,000 to start the division.

Instead of stacks of documents, the scanning service yields a CD-ROM. The finished disks have their own viewing software, which means clients don't need a special program to use them, Denney says.

Once scanned to disk, the documents can be searched for phrases, names, dates, and keywords. They can also be loaded onto secure Web sites for viewing from anywhere in the world.

The scanning technology has been popular in larger cities for about 10 years and is just starting to move into smaller markets now, Denney says.

"We were getting requests from some out-of-town firms who were working on cases in Syracuse," Denney says. "They were saying, 'Don't give us a dozen boxes. Just give us a CD.' It's much easier for clients to deal with the information this way."

The new scanning technology should also allow Avalon to improve service for medical clients, Denney says. The search capabilities of the finished CDs will allow hospitals and doctors to have easier access to patient records, he explains.

Avalon has annual revenues of about \$3.5 million. □

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