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*Commitment
To Customer
Service Is Clear*

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By Heather Navarra, *The Write Type for *Profiles of Success*

ABCO Business Interiors is a diverse company dedicated to service in the office environment. Started in 1993, this division of the ABCO Group specializes in selling new and used office workstations. And it all came about quite by accident.

Mike Menzies founded ABCO Moving Services in 1987. Involved in transportation most of his life, Menzies had extensive experience in air freight as well as domestic moving. Shortly after returning to Canada in 1978, Menzies worked in the household moving industry and, in 1983, while working at Acme Moving, he met Mike McCallum. The two sales agents quickly realized they shared similar business principles and respect for each other grew.

In 1987, both Mikes resigned from Acme Moving and struck out as entrepreneurs. McCallum began his own renovation business, which he ran successfully for six years, while Menzies started ABCO Moving Services. They stayed in touch and occasionally collaborated.

In the beginning, ABCO dealt with all areas related to the moving business but, within two years, the name was changed to ABCO Office Moving & Installations and the company began to specialize in office moving. Their expertise grew and clients benefited from experienced staff who could quickly and professionally dismantle and reconfigure an office.

Realizing that his business could benefit from a partner, Menzies invited McCallum to join ABCO in 1993 and things quickly began to fall into place. ABCO received a call from a client who





needed a reliable firm to assist with refurbished furniture. Even though it wasn't their area of expertise, they knew they had the connections and could handle the job.

A rapid learning curve proved to them that they could expertly thrive in this niche that presented an untapped opportunity. Manufacturers were impressed with ABCO's ability to explain the features of their products, and encouraged them to handle their furniture. Able to provide a complete package – move planning, furniture layouts, supplying the furniture, delivery and installation – they were quickly successful.

ABCO Business Interiors was created, specializing in office furniture, and has grown to become the largest new and used office furniture showroom in Ontario. Currently with one location, they cater to clients of any size, from an individual home office to the largest of corporations.

Their outlet in Toronto offers pricing to suit any budget. Products include individual workstations to full office suites, storage, meeting tables—a complete package of customized solutions can be

delivered. They will not be undersold by any competitor's everyday prices, a unique guarantee in this competitive industry.

"Mike [Menzie] is a people person," shares McCallum. "He has the great ideas and concepts, and is not afraid of hard work. Our skills complement each other; I'm the technical one and can bring a concept to completion." These two hardworking gentlemen have found it extremely beneficial to collaborate, providing a sounding board for each other to develop new ideas and the support to get the job done.

The company's two divisions integrate well. With ABCO's own refurbishing shop, used furniture is restored to provide increased sales appeal and a brand new 'look' at a fraction of the cost.

"Without the refurbishing shop," says Menzie, "we would just have a collection of dusty, used furniture in need of attention. Instead, used furniture offered has a much better quality and appearance, increasing the value to our customers." Clients are consistently thrilled with both the results and how well they fit into their budgets.

The moving division has grown to be professional and reputable. As a Toronto-based, Canadian-owned company, they provide a complete office relocation service catering to a wide range of clients, from those wishing to move a small office to clients moving several hundreds of employees, as well as warehouse and plant moves. The company has grown physically, too. From modest beginnings occupying 3,000 square feet, ABCO has consistently expanded and now occupies about 62,000 square feet.

Between the two divisions, the company has 40 full-time and up to 30 part-time employees. Experienced in dealing with all types of systems furniture, ABCO's staff helps set this company apart from their competitors. "Our people and their commitment to service is a major contributor to the company's success," notes McCallum. Menzie agrees, noting, "We have significant competition in this business and our staff continually focus on doing the job right. Our employees share our commitment to client satisfaction."

The diverse background of ABCO's staff expands the company's ability to

handle assignments. "Because of our staff's expertise," says McCallum, "we are able to look at jobs from a broader perspective. We can analyze any situation and potentially come up with a unique solution." Many staff are long-time employees whose experience contributes great value to the business.

Indeed, the most significant factor in ABCO's success is the way they treat clients. Hardworking and dedicated sales staff are committed not only to securing the assignment, but also seeing it through. "The job is not complete until the customer is happy," says Menzies.

When asked whether a formal program is in place to generate referrals, McCallum answers, "Yes: good old, honest hard work! Putting the client first and making your contact look good. My job is to do the homework for them. I need to ensure the client understands the alternatives and is getting the best 'bang for their buck', with sound reasons to support decisions. An educated customer is the best customer."

"I love the challenges and the sense of achievement that comes with a

job well done," says McCallum. "The positive reaction from a satisfied client is always gratifying." Indeed, praise from customers is the 'high' that continues to inspire McCallum each day. "Today, people expect a good job, so you have to go way above and beyond to get a testimonial. The thank-you letters we receive are therefore significant to us."

The awards received are another testament to their unparalleled success, and include a Business Excellence Award from the City of Scarborough recognizing business growth. ABCO Office Moving & Installations has won the Consumers Choice Award for four years, and ABCO Business Interiors won for the last two years. "We are genuinely interested in each client having a positive experience," says Menzies. Management's continual commitment to a positive code of ethics also contributes significantly to the success of the business.

These dedicated entrepreneurs believe in giving back to the community. They support four children in underprivileged countries, several Toronto charities,

community events, and hockey and soccer teams. Politicians get a good deal from ABCO when they set up election offices, regardless of the party they represent.

Diversity is evident in ABCO's involvement as a supplier of furniture props to the movie industry. Over the years, industry participants have come to know and trust ABCO. "Set designers and production companies like dealing with us because we're fair," says Menzies. "Plus, our staff's experience is useful to them in locating specific products."

ABCO's outstanding customer service and professionalism has driven their growth and built their outstanding reputation in the industry. This diverse group of companies has both the expertise and the experience to serve a wide range of clients. Expansion plans include the potential for another office in the west end of Toronto, along with bringing on younger staff with new ideas and concepts -- always welcomed.

All of these factors ensure that ABCO will continue to delight their customers and grow over the foreseeable future.



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