

LORI SPIESS

CEO | VIRTUAL OFFICENTERS



FINANCE & COMMERCE
MINNESOTANS
ON THE MOVE

Lori Spiess knows what people want from an office business center. It's been 30 years since she founded OffiCenters, which offers pay-as-you-go office packages at four different locations that include everything from receptionists to meeting rooms and administrative support. During that time Spiess has watched business trends closely in order to change and grow her company's services to meet the needs of regional, national and international professionals.

Recently, she realized that the latest trend was the need for businesses, particularly startups, to go virtual. So in July of last year she started VirtualOffiCenters—seven months later, at the end of February, the new venture's business had tripled. "We've been offering a virtual office product all along, but with so many more people starting businesses right now, I thought

it was time to push this as a separate brand to make people more aware of it," Spiess explained.

Though many small businesses start with a home office, there are a lot of challenges to working at home. That's why most companies can benefit from the support VirtualOffiCenters provides, said Spiess. In addition to lifting some of the day-to-day burdens off businesses, virtual services can make a small company appear more professional, or larger than it really is.

VirtualOffiCenters customers, Spiess points out, can make use of receptionist services so clients will always reach a live person when they call and want to ask a question or schedule an appointment. Packages and mail can be sent to any one of OffiCenters' four locations and furnished meeting rooms can be used anytime.

Because one of the things work-at-home business owners miss most is co-

workers, VirtualOffiCenters is creating opportunities to bring people together through networking events and training in areas like web design. On Thursday evenings, those who attend the newly launched Social Media Academy can learn how to make the most of venues like Twitter and Facebook. "Some of my clients have really been thrown by social media and want to know to market themselves in this changing world," said Spiess.

As for the future, Spiess believes more and more businesses, regardless of size, will soon be moving away from office buildings in favor of more mobile workplaces. And she plans to be ready. "I see us expanding and redesigning centers to become more virtual, so that will be our focus," she said. "I always tell clients to focus on what they do best and we'll help with the rest."

- MELEAH MAYNARD