

# Sitting Pretty

Adam London is growing a business from other's furniture.

**Art Aisner**

Special to the Jewish News

**A**dam London knows office furniture. Probably a little too well, he says, acknowledging he can usually name the brand, design and even the model number of furnishings in other people's offices or in the background of movie and television scenes.

"I know it makes me kind of a furniture nerd, but I have a lot of pride in knowing my business in and out," he said.

London is co-founder of Efficient Office Solutions in Livonia. The company collects, refurbishes and re-sells pre-owned office furniture and cubicles throughout Metro Detroit and other Midwest cities.

Now in their fifth year of operation, London, 31, and business partner Johnny Ginnetti, 29, recently passed \$1 million in total sales. And they've carved out a distinct niche in a rather undiscovered and growing market, despite the sluggish economy.

Though Michigan has a robust office-furniture manufacturing industry with international heavyweights such as Steelcase, Haworth and Herman Miller, there are only a handful of vendors that deal in pre-owned merchandise. Fewer still operate wholesale, which makes London's business more attractive to small start-ups and big companies alike.

## Taking The Plunge

London and Ginnetti met while working as sales reps for a local office-furniture supplier.

Both sons of long-time salesmen and equally ambitious, the pair left the comforts of secure jobs and ventured out on their own with just an idea and entrepreneurial spirit.

"We used to sit around work talking to the older salesmen who kept saying they should go into business for themselves, and we didn't want to become that guy who was always just talking about it. We figured, 'Let's just do it,'" London said.

With a little seed money and guidance from their parents, they entered

a market with about two dozen competitors and literally absorbed every facet of the job. They became movers, installers, maintenance specialists, salesmen and CEOs all at once. Their persistence and all-in approach landed some big clients, but largely drew skepticism in the local market that first year, London said. But things were about to change.

"That first year in business, we got a lot of people saying, 'Used office furniture? Why? I'll just buy new,'" London said. "It was something the dealers didn't even want to deal with, but that was 2005 and the economy has changed things dramatically."

As budgets tightened and companies streamlined to keep pace with technological advances in office work and boost efficiency, London benefited.

Now dealers that were once disinterested in the market are clamoring to be strategic partners.

He estimates 30 percent growth in the business in 2009 — for the third consecutive year — commendable in even good economic times and remarkable during the national recession.

## Homegrown

Looking around the 10,000-square-foot warehouse filled with chairs, file cabinets and dismantled cubicles, London knows each piece was likely used by someone now out of a job. But he looks at the positive.

"We'll go into a big company and buy 400 chairs that used to be sat in by employed people, but at the same time, we're offering to help start small businesses or help companies stay afloat by reducing their costs," he said. "If we can take a bad situation and do a little bit to make someone's life a little better, I feel good about that."

London is also proud of his company's ability to keep thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of cubicle components, chairs and office cabinetry from landfills. And he donates gently used merchandise to schools and non-profit organizations when possible.

It's part of London's philosophy of keeping business and local community connected.



Adam London at his Livonia warehouse

Though born in Cleveland to a pair of Long Island natives, London moved to Michigan before he was 2 and has always considered it his home.

After graduating from Bloomfield Hills Andover High School in 1995, London earned a degree in supply-chain management from Michigan State University and resisted the temptation to leave the state after graduation.

He settled his own roots here and bought a home with wife Nikki not long after their wedding last August.

"I have a lot of pride in the community here, the sports teams, the people, Michigan itself," he said. "I'm so happy to be here and I think this economy really will come back. I believe it because I believe in the people here. They work hard at all levels."

The same can be said about London, according to Reuben Levy, president

and owner of Novi-based Global Office Solutions, one of London's first and best clients. "Adam's an efficient, stand-up guy," he said. "He's ethical and does what he says he's going to do."

Levy also said that keeping businesses within the Jewish community thriving, especially in a slumping economy, is critically important, which London understands.

London credits the community with being able to maintain his company's steady success. "I think the companies that just grow so fast, like the dot-coms that went from small volumes to making millions of dollars a month, didn't have the right infrastructure," he said.

"I like that we've grown steadily and have that foundation underneath us to grow further. And there's a lot more growing we want to do." □