

COURIER POST
March 2005

Used office furniture is back on the market at Boomerang.
Washington Township firm headed by innovative CEO, 28

Like the people who use it, office furniture frequently moves on to a second career.

Boomerang might be a placement service for cubicles and file cabinets, matching one company's castoffs with an appreciative new business.

"We're for the person who would rather have a used Mercedes than a new Kia," said Seth DeForest, the company's 28 year old CEO.

He stands in the showroom of Boomerang's 70,000-square-foot headquarters, besides adult sized playground swings. That's where DeForest interviews job candidates.

"I always ask them: 'Do you cook?'" he said.

It's a serious question, as well as a sign of DeForest's fresh approach to doing business. The company is in the process of installing a kitchen in its showroom, where the staff will cook for each other and for clients.

"So much nicer than just hanging out in a waiting room," he said.

DeForest switched from studying food science to business at Cornell University, moving to New York City after graduation. He managed Robert DeNiro's restaurant, Tribeca Grill, played basketball with Rocco DiSpirito, star of the reality TV show *The Restaurant*, and later helped to launch the Flagship W Hotel.

"Then I decided it was time to get out of New York and do something new," he recalled.

DeForest was 24. His father-in-law told him about a used furniture company that was going under in Philadelphia.

Although he didn't know much about office furniture – "I had never worked in a cubicle" he recalled – DeForest thought his skills in customer service would translate smoothly to the business.

He renamed the company Boomerang, after the Australian throwing club that turns in flight, starting out with a bookkeeper and a few warehouse workers. Two

years ago, Boomerang loaded its inventory into 90 tractor-trailers and relocated to the defunct PSI brake plant in the Hurffville section of the township. Workers immediately began steaming the grease from the walls and stripping away the drop ceiling to expose dramatic rafters.

That's now the setting for a vintage biplane, chairs designed 1940's icon Harry Bertoia and a classic Porsche being garaged for a relative. A 1947 Indian Chief motorcycle should arrive any day.

In the cavernous warehouse, the floor is lined with office furniture by makers such as Knoll and Steel case, some still in its original packaging. The desks and chairs, conference tables and credenzas were once owned by such corporate titans as American Airlines, American Express and Towers-Perrin.

“Except for dot.coms and telecoms.”