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Boomerang

What goes around - comes around

Company gives new spin to pre-owned furniture

In "Blink," a new non-fiction work on bookstore shelves, author Malcolm Gladwell asserts that we all form a lasting impression within two seconds of seeing something or meeting someone. In the "blink" of an eye, Gladwell argues, we make a judgment call about a person, a setting, an event.

Walk into the showroom of Boomerang Inc., in the Hurffville section of Washington Township, and the first impression are those of impeccable attention to detail, style and creativity.

Especially creativity. There, charging up at the wall outlet is a Segway human transporter. Look right and a full sized red bi-plane is suspended from the ceiling. At left, a classic 50s red roadster, lovingly restored. Directly ahead are swings – the playground kind – also hanging from the high ceiling.

The message is clear. This is a company whose employees know how to have fun, and who know – on a serious, professional level – how to design an interior space with furnishings that reflect a distinct sense of style.

That's just the message Seth DeForest, Boomerang Inc. president wants to relay to clients.

"I started Boomerang with one vision – that given the right environment, good people will perform extraordinarily," he said. "I created my own facility here as a physical declaration of that vision."

The expansive room filled with toys is also the company's main showroom and only a part of a full 75,000-square-foot facility which also houses a massive warehouse. With plans to reconfigure the space in the works, DeForest delightedly points to the long showroom wall featuring differing office cubicle designs – high tech, gleaming, wood-grained – a style for every taste.

And yet – none of those showroom samples are new. All are "pre-owned" in the parlance of the industry. Yet even viewed close up, every surface, every chair and desk, appears to have come directly from the factory.

That's the Boomerang Inc. business – buying and re-selling gently used office furniture.

DeForest entered the pre-owned furniture field four years ago, when he founded Boomerang. His first facility was in Philadelphia; he relocated to the Hurffville site two years ago.

“It's a classic deal-making kind of business, with lots of handshake deals,” he said. “We bought out another company in the industry that had gone out of business and they had a huge inventory.”

Boomerang is not DeForest's first venture in the business world. After earning a business degree at Cornell University, DeForest had spent years in New York City in the hospitality industry, including a stint managing the Robert DeNiro-owend Tribeca Grille.

DeForest saw a wide-open market, since he said many big firms often have a three- or five-year lease at a location. At the end of a lease, companies often relocate to a new site and find it actually cheaper to purchase pre-owned cubicle components, desks, chairs, and filing cabinets – at an estimated savings of 25 to 50 percent – than pay for the transporting their current inventory, or to pay full-price for new furniture.

“Our roots are in selling to new furniture dealers.” DeForest said. “When the economy went down a few years back, those dealers needed to offer lower-cost pre-owned furnishings to clients.”

DeForest's formula for success appears to be working. “It's at a point now where new clients come to us. People are directing them to Boomerang.”

“We're tying up all the final details on projects in California, Wisconsin, New York City and two projects each in Pennsylvania and in New Jersey,” He said. “Next week, we're starting up on projects in Boston, Mass., and in North Carolina.”

DeForest's clients list reads like a Who's Who of the business world. Among his far-flung customers are firms including the Starr Restaurant Group, Glaxo SmithKline, Ingersoll Rand, Sony Inc., Roche Diagnostics, Coldwell Banker, the Saint Gobain Corporation and Schering Plough.

Some insight into Boomerang's success – and into the high standards set by DeForest when he founded the company – is gleaned on a tour of the facility's immense warehouse.

Row after row of office furniture components, just shipped to the warehouse and still loosely housed in giant boxes, sit ready for inspection and preparation.

Near other rows, workers meticulously clean and repair and then pack, each and every component. The finished components – sealed in plastic and carefully labeled – rest on pallets and appear indistinguishable from a package of similar goods newly manufactured.

This intensive attention to detail and quality, along with the cost savings of buying pre-owned furniture and the personalized customer service that Boomerang offers its clientele, has brought the firm many new projects and a growing reputation for expert delivery and superior standards.

Locally, Boomerang has worked on projects with Omega Engineering in the Pureland Industrial Park; with several Allstate Insurance offices in both Gloucester and Camden counties; and with Aerial Lifts, a mobile elevating work platform firm in Washington Township.

Timothy Sexton, Aerial Lifts owner, said his company purchased furniture from Boomerang about a year ago and plan to buy more soon.

“I’d said to (DeForest), ‘I’ll just send some of my men over to pick it up when it comes in. We can clean it ourselves.’ But Seth said to me, “every piece of equipment that leaves (Boomerang) has a standard that we meet,”” Sexton said. “And that just blew me away. You don’t get that kind of commitment to service anymore. When they delivered it, it looked new, like it came right out of the factory box.”