

EMERGING BUSINESS

A SNAPSHOT OF CNY'S UP-AND-COMING COMPANIES

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Avalon emphasizes 'old-fashioned' business model

By Kevin Tampone

Journal Staff

■ **Major players:** Jonathan Denney, president; Jon Willette, chief operating officer; Shawn Thrall, vice president for Syracuse region; Daniel Gerling, vice president for Utica region; Andrew McManus, president of InfoTrak division (provides on-site document scanning for medical facilities)

■ **What does your company do?** Avalon provides copying and document-production services for businesses throughout Central New York. The company has locations in Syracuse and Utica. It can handle large and small jobs and produces everything from pamphlets to architectural plans and blueprints, Denney says. The company also has its own graphic designers so it can even handle layout, he adds. Avalon is not open to the public, focusing instead on businesses. The company emphasizes confidentiality because many of its jobs contain highly sensitive information. All employees undergo background checks and sign confidentiality agreements. Services are available 24 hours, seven days a week, and include free pickup and delivery. Employees also hand check every page of every copy for accuracy. "It's that real, old-fashioned idea of business," Denney says. "It's about bending over backwards and jumping through hoops for your customers."

■ **Who are your clients?** The company serves clients from architects and attorneys to businesses of all sizes. The one thing they all have in common is that they regularly need top-notch copying and document production, Denney says. "They're people that need high-quality copies, that de-



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Avalon Copy Centers President Jonathan Denney stands in the company's new work space at 901 N. State St. Avalon will be moving there in the next few months to alleviate some overcrowding at its current offices. The papers in the background denote where some of the copiers and printers will go in the new setup.

mand fast turnaround time, that demand 24-hour availability," he says. "They need specialty stuff, high-quality color, binding. We've got some customers that use us four times a year, but they're big jobs. Some use us every day." An average client probably uses Avalon several times per week, Denney says.

■ **What's your background?**

Denney, originally from the Albany area, started his first copy business, Camelot Legal Copy, in 1996 in the Capitol Region. Before that, he sold legal copies in Hartford, Conn. A few years later, he decided to move to the Syracuse area. He sold his inter-

est in Camelot to his partners, and started Avalon with three employees in 2000. He says he targeted the upstate New York markets because he saw a need. "This level of service [was] in every major metropolitan area in the country," Denney says. "The smaller, second- and third-tier cities didn't have it."

■ **What kind of revenue growth are you projecting?**

Denney expects 2005 revenues of \$3.5 million, a 30 percent increase from 2004 revenues of \$2.7 million.

■ **What about new hiring?**

Avalon just added two new workers last week and employs about

60 people now. Several work as far away as Pennsylvania doing on-site document scanning for medical facilities. Denney expects that part of the business to triple in size by the end of the year to about 50 employees, which would give Avalon about 100 total employees.

■ **Have you added any new services to the business recently?**

Avalon began offering an image-scanning service about a year ago. The technology, which cost about \$100,000 to start up, allows originals to be scanned to a CD-ROM. The disks are fully searchable, making the service attractive to a variety of clients, especially law firms and medical facilities, Denney says.

■ **Will you need more space to accommodate all this growth?**

The company currently has a 4,000-square-foot office on Erie Boulevard West, but in the next few months will move to a 13,000-square-foot space at 901 N. State St. The move will alleviate some overcrowding at the company's current offices.

■ **What is behind the growth?**

Denney says the company's expansion is a direct result of the level of service it provides clients. "Our model is so customer focused. We don't say no. That's a tribute to the people who work here. They're incredible," he says. "Nobody is doing this type of work to this level. If our customers have a deadline problem, we take it and make it our problem. Sometimes we'll get a job at five or six at night, and it'll be due at seven or eight in the morning. We'll have 20 people here working on it all night. We'll get it done." Denney also says he takes care of his clients as people. With every job Avalon completes, it provides the customer a free bag of cookies freshly baked at Avalon's headquarters office. "How do you take care of the secretary or the attorney? You give them high-quality, accurate copies as fast as possible," Denney says. "How do you take care of the person and thank them for being your customer? Cookies." □

Contact **Tampone** at ktampone@cnybj.com

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