

PUGET SOUND **Business Journal**

Business Leaders Get It.

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Apex Facility Resources executives Marlaire McCauley, president, and her husband, Matt Watson, vice president of sales and marketing, in front of their West Seattle location with one of their trucks and some of their chairs.

OFFICE SPACE

Wife-husband team at Apex Facility Resources helps companies make

their move

Story By
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Marlaire McCauley has turned a favor done for her husband into a thriving new business for both of them.

Founded in 1997, Seattle-based Apex Facility Resources, Inc. now provides a range of corporate relocation services —

everything from storing or disposing of unneeded office furniture to planning the layout of a new space to breaking down a

APEX: *Relocation firm aids companies on their moves*

corporate office and setting it back up in the new location with operating computer and phone systems.

Back in the late 1990s, McCauley was a paralegal working in construction industry litigation. She was mulling a career change when her husband, Matt Watson, a moving company executive with nearly 20 years experience in corporate relocations, asked if she would help get a client's furniture panels refurbished.

What started as a few dozen panels quickly mushroomed into 500. McCauley ultimately tracked down a company in the Midwest that could refurbish the panels. But the experience helped her realize how challenging such tasks could be for an office manager or chief financial officer with little experience in refurbishing an office or planning and coordinating a move.

"It was a baptism by fire but I had found a niche," McCauley said.

She founded Apex in 1997 to provide mid-sized businesses with fewer than 250 employees with gently used or refurbished office furniture that was of good quality but less expensive than new. The company quickly began adding other services such as providing commercial cleaning, and remanufacturing of used office furnishings.

In September 2004, her husband joined the company along with several project managers from his former firm. McCauley is president of the company; Watson is vice president of sales and marketing.

"You won't find many moving companies with space planners who can help you liquidate your excess furniture or the technical expertise to connect and disconnect computers," McCauley said.

The company also operates several warehouses where Apex stores office equipment and furniture for clients, using an online inventory system with photos and descriptions that makes it easier to keep track of assets.

Apex now works with a range of clients — from small businesses with no facilities manager to large publicly traded companies that have their own in-house facilities department. Also, the company has business relationships around the country that enable it to handle clients' needs in other markets. For example, Apex recently helped Virginia-based Sprint Nextel Corp. with some office relocations in California.

In the past 18 months, the firm has experienced explosive growth. Apex has swelled from four employees to more than 30, with annual revenue bounding from just under \$1 million to \$5.2 million.

Apex recently helped the University of Washington's pediatric faculty practice group at Children's Hospital & Regional Medical Center relocate two groups of employees into a new space. The assignment required reconfiguring workstations to fit a new space and obtaining additional compatible used office furniture. The new office's triangular space presented a particular challenge. But Apex space planners were able to create an efficient layout, suggesting a separate workroom with sound barriers for housing printers and copiers.

The greatest challenge, however, was that both moves needed to be completed over a weekend with the combined office up and running Monday morning.

"The bottom line is they delivered," said Rick Nielson, executive director of the pediatric practice group. "We were up and functional with 55 employees on Monday morning."

"We could not have done it ourselves," Nielson added. "They had the right equipment and the right expertise."

Apex is now planning a move of its own later this spring to new offices in the Georgetown neighborhood south of downtown Seattle. While warehouse rents there are considerably more expensive

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Marlaine McCauley, president, Apex FacilityResources Inc.



than farther south in Kent, Watson said the extra expense is worth it to be closer to customers and better able to deliver furnishings quickly.

"It makes a huge difference in the service we can offer. We can say it's a 15-minute drive time and we pay a premium to say that," Watson said.

Like many business owners, McCauley and Watson say their biggest challenge is finding the right people. Unlike some entrepreneurs who try to hang on to every piece of their business, McCauley said she and Watson strive to hire talented people who can make good decisions for the business independently.

Both also believe a company should be active in its community. Apex recently helped the Seattle Housing Authority move some families displaced by Hurricane Katrina into apartments that Apex helped equip with furniture, televisions and microwaves.

McCauley and Watson said they are able to work alongside each other because they share similar values. For example, they both believe all employees should be trained in customer service. That's because it's often the moving crew that spends the most time face to face with the company's customers, Watson said.

And, even when McCauley and Watson disagree, they are able to respect each other's opinions, the couple said.

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