

The List



Wanted: Mature workers

ATHENA D. MERRITT
STAFF WRITER

BLUE BELL — In placing people in jobs, The Carney Group Inc. has helped everyone from fresh college graduates to senior citizens. But it is the latter that has created a niche that has helped propel the Blue Bell firm onto the list of fastest-growing private companies in the region.

The Carney Group drew \$7.2 million in revenue last year and nearly 125 percent sales growth between 2004 and 2006, ranking it 44th on this year's Philadelphia 100 list.

In founding the firm with \$60,000 in startup capital in 1992, company President John H. Carney and his wife Nanette Sciolla Carney, who serves as CEO, noticed an immediate demand for jobs by mature workers. The business climate at that time was one of "downsizing and rightsizing," and older workers were being ushered out by companies trying to cut bottom lines, John said.

"They were a victim of their own success, the dollars got high and they were downsized," he said of older workers. "Most of them weren't job hoppers, they had worked at one or two companies their whole careers and they didn't know how to navigate their own careers."

The area's senior population, or Gold Collar workers, as the Carney Group refers to them, quickly became a steady pipeline of business for the full-service employment firm. As the company has grown it's built a healthy business placing younger workers as well, but placement of mature workers remains its sweet spot.

"The mature worker doesn't have to doctor up his résumé or put in Grecian Formula before they come see us. We will market them as they are and we will not disguise their background," John said of the company's penchant for placing older workers.

With 1.9 million residents aged 65 years and over, Pennsylvania has the third-highest percentage in the country of older citizens, according to Census Bureau estimates. An estimated 942,745 of the residents living in or near Philadelphia are age 55 or over, and of those, an estimated 350,839 are in the work force, according to the bureau's 2006 American Community Survey.

Placing mature workers in the work force today is much easier than when the

"There was a lot of missionary work that was required in the beginning," he said. "We had to sell the benefit of the mature worker — somebody who was reliable, somebody who was stable, somebody who had a good work ethic."

Today, it's not a hard sell, as companies better appreciate those qualities and mature workers have more to offer than in the past, Nanette said.



J. Carney

"They don't even call them older workers anymore," she said. "Fifteen years ago you had a mature work force that wasn't computer literate, today you get the work ethic and certainly you get the computer literacy. I think a lot of their skills are more transitional because of technology."



N. Carney

Just 34 percent of workers polled in a recent survey by the staffing firm of Robert Half Management Resources planned to quit work entirely upon reaching retirement age. Of the 492 full- and part-time adult workers who participated in the poll, 24 percent planned to change fields or work at something new when they were ready to retire, 14 percent planned to continue careers as consultants and 14 percent planned to work fewer hours for the same company.

"Longer life spans, increased financial responsibilities and a desire to remain mentally and physically active are prompting today's workers to view retirement differently than their predecessors," said Paul McDonald, executive director of Robert Half Management Resources, in a recent news release.

The Carney Group's ability to supply a senior workforce was a large selling point in landing a deal with a client that has a nationwide contract to supply personnel to various Blue Cross health plans. In the three years the Carney Group has held the contract it has placed between 600 to 700 seniors, John said.

"We are heavily involved in the Medicare D plan," John said of the contract. "They wanted participants to talk to a more mature voice on the other end of the phone when they were enrolling and that has propelled our growth," said John.

Once a two-person operation, the Carney Group now employs 12. Expansion remains on the minds of the company leaders, who just moved into 5,000 square feet of new office space in October 2006.

"There is always a possibility of opening another location in the Delaware Valley. In the back of our mind, franchising is an area that we could potentially gravitate to," he said.

UP CLOSE

COMPANY: The Carney Group Inc.

FOUNDERS: Nanette Sciolla Carney, CEO; and John Carney, president

LOCATION: Blue Bell

TYPE OF COMPANY: Job placement firm that specializing in older workers.

YEAR FOUNDED: 1992

2006 EMPLOYEES: 12

2006 REVENUE: \$7.2 million

2004-2006 GROWTH RATE: 125 percent

Fastest-growing

privately held

companies

