

"One by one, as they realize their competition is upgrading and using the technology that's out there, we find they come around," said Bell, whose Office Equipment Belleville (OEB) has expanded to include five dealerships in Eastern Ontario and 36 employees.

Office Equipment and DCB Business Systems Group - with offices in Kingston, Cobourg, Pembroke and Cornwall - is Eastern Ontario's largest dealership of office copiers, facsimiles and imaging systems in Eastern Ontario.

But, stress Bell and the firm's Peter Bailey, "we're so much more than that, today."

A newly formed digital systems division of DCB is poised to bring the future of automated office systems out of the realm of wish lists and onto the desk-top.

"With the introduction of the (Internet) network and automated office business machines that can take full advantage of what the network has to offer, we're asking businesses to let us look at their operation and show them how we can position them to make the network work for them," said Bell.

"Very few - less than 20 per cent - of the businesses in Eastern Ontario are utilizing the full potential of network systems in their businesses. When they realize how simple, cost-effective and practical it is to tie everything together, many companies we've worked with can't believe they hadn't done it sooner."

With a "management team that has broader skills than just selling office equipment," Bell said his Lahr Drive OE headquarters office is out to change the way modern offices function in Eastern Ontario.

"Canon's new GP series of digital copier, fax, scanner and printer systems puts a compact unit in the work place that is capable of delivering a number of functions in one location," said Bailey.

"Where you'd have a copier, fax, computer scanner and printer scattered around your office, you now have the function in one unit, digitally and run by separate processors for each. This allows the multi-functional GP200 to perform three jobs simultaneously. It's modular, so you can tailor your equipment to meet your needs."

Bell said Canon, in 1999, begins manufacturing nothing but digital equipment that will work with any office computer system and which is ideally suited for Windows applications. "Analog copiers," said Bell, "is yesterday's technology. But, that doesn't mean we're not going to continue to service and repair analog equipment. We have thousands of pieces out there that will keep running for years and years. In some business applications analog copiers are still the best solution."

The Belleville headquarters has sales staff, service representatives and a bustling repair and service department that breathes new lives into old office machinery.

"We can rebuild a copier, from scratch. Once a company is through with one and move up to a newer, digital model, there are still customers who find they can't afford a new piece of equipment and realize a 50 to 60 per cent cost savings on a remanufactured model."

According to Bailey, "We don't sell to people, we deal with them on a consulting basis. We're constantly working with our people in the field, who are all wired into our central office, here in Belleville, by laptop and cell phone. The Canon network is at their disposal for service and sales information."

Not, Bell points out, that the Canon distributorship isn't an Ontario success story in its own right.

"We have 4,000 business customers and 6,000 pieces of equipment in the field that we service," he said. "Geographically, we are one of the largest Canon regions in Canada and we're not sitting still. We're looking to expand," said the company founder, who came to Belleville in 1985 as a "corporate turnaround specialist" with Milliken Industries of Canada and who bought OE in 1988.

Recently, on celebrating the company's 10th anniversary, Bell and Bailey had time to reflect on what the company has become.

In recent years OEB, as the Belleville office of DCB Business Systems is known, has designed and installed complete office systems, consisting of computer hardware and software, network operating systems and multi-functional work group copier-fax printers connected directly to computer desktop PCs at locations such as Trenton Memorial Hospital,

OFFICE EQUIPMENT

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