

Family of printers is 'on same page'

Chicago Tribune, July 20, 1999



When Diane Tews eventually turns over the reins of Graphix Products Inc. to the company's three top executives, she will have a pretty good idea of where the company will be going.

This mother knows her sons.

"I'm comfortable with the way things are going and how they'll do," she said, smiling at two of her sons, Chris and Jason. "I'm sure things will be in good hands."

Together with a third son, Hank Diane Tews has built the West Chicago printing company into an \$8 million-a-year business that emphasizes a family-friendly philosophy that truly comes from family.

"As a mother, I love it. I love working with my sons," said Diane Tews, president and chief executive officer of the firm.

The company began 28 years ago when Henry Tews Sr. lost his job and went into business with his wife in their home. Their first printing job was to make "Hello, My Name Is ..." labels-products they still make.

With their children-there are five altogether-helping out while in

school, the company continued to grow, moving to a small facility in Wheaton and then a 20,000-square-foot building in West Chicago before moving into their new 50,000-square-foot building on Wegner Drive in May.

"Our children were raised in the business," Diane Tews said. "They made signs, they swept the floors."

In 1990, about the time Henry Tews Sr. turned over full management to Diane, sons Jason and



Chris Tews decided to commit full time to helping their mother and older brother Hank run Graphix.

Today, with Hank as plant manager and chief operating officer, Chris as sales manager and Jason as marketing manager, the company topped \$8 million in sales last year and is ahead of projections into the first few months of this fiscal year,

Jason Tews said.

The company produces a wide range of printed materials. The client base is also wide, ranging from non-profit organizations to big corporations such as Kraft Foods and Motorola. One reason behind the move to a new facility was the acquisition of a modern six-color press to accommodate more business.

The growth has helped the company become the fastest-growing printer in Illinois and the 16th-fastest nationwide, according to an industry publication. The number of employees has blossomed from 10 a decade ago to more than 50 today.

The Tews family credits much of their growth to their personal, family-oriented philosophy.

"We serve the big companies just like we serve the neighborhood businesses," Jason Tews said.

The family atmosphere is also evident at the workplace, where Graphix Products gives money to employees to dedicate to charities of their choice.

Is all this too much family togetherness? Not really, according to the Tewses. "Whenever we vote on something big, it's almost always 4-0," Jason Tews said. "We're all on the same page."

Graphix Products, Inc.

399 Wegner Drive West Chicago, IL 60185 • Phone 630.231.2425 • Fax 630.231.2677