

The Language Of Growth

Government Contracts Contribute to Growth at Geneva Worldwide

By Anna Degraffinreid

Hurricane Katrina tore through the streets of New Orleans and surrounding areas in the summer of 2005, displacing more than 800,000 people—including a community of Chinese-speaking evacuees who relocated to New York after the storm.

The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency needed translators so it could assist the evacuees, and it called Geneva Worldwide—a New York City-based staffing firm and government contractor that provides language translation services—to help get the job done.

City, state, and federal government contracts constitute 80% to 85% of Geneva Worldwide's business and helped propel the 106-year-old firm's revenues 163.9% between 2004 and 2007. The company's triple-digit growth earned it a spot on the Inc. 5,000—*Inc.* magazine's record of America's fastest-growing private companies.

"The biggest growth factor was definitely the government contracts we acquired," says Craig Buckstein, the

company's chief operating officer. His father Joel Buckstein, Geneva Worldwide's president, says the company is developing a sales force to increase its pursuit of city, state, and federal contracts.

Learning the Lingo

Geneva Worldwide began contracting with the state of New York in the 1970s. The company bid on a request for proposal to provide language services to a city agency.

"The winning of that contract was the catalyst we needed to build a major database of linguists," says Craig. "We used that successful contract as a springboard to other government contracts on the city and state levels."

The Bucksteins have owned and managed the firm for three generations and see even greater opportunity for the firm because New York mayor Michael Bloomberg signed Executive Order 120 last year. The order mandates that city agencies offering direct public services must provide language assistance to

Geneva Worldwide in *Inc.*

Year opened: 1903

2004 revenue: \$2.2 million

2007 revenue: \$5.7 million

Growth: 163.9%

Rank on the 2008 Inc. 5,000: 2,245

Services: Long-term and contract help, payrolling, temporary help, temporary to hire

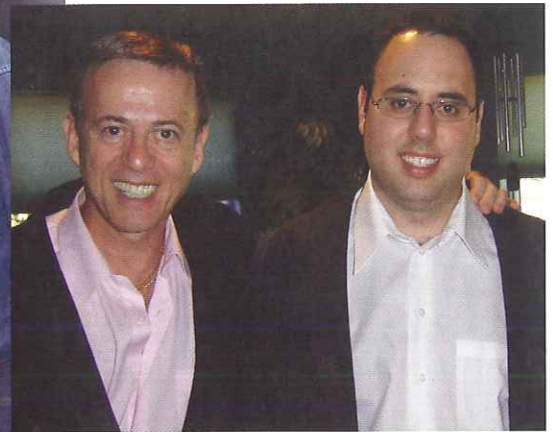
Occupational categories: Industrial, information technology, office-clerical, technical, professional

Growth secret: "The biggest factor for growth was definitely the government contracts we acquired."

—Craig Buckstein, chief operating officer



Left: Craig Buckstein (left) poses with Leo Morales, dispatch supervisor for the interpreting department (center), and Joel Buckstein.



Above: Joel Buckstein (left) and his son Craig have been leading Geneva Worldwide together for the past 10 years. The company has been in the family for three generations.

residents with limited English proficiency.

Joel says that public services in New York City are “very strong,” and he and Craig expect Geneva Worldwide to play a major role in implementing this order.

The firm has been involved in some of the nation’s most intriguing events, including U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, through its role as a government contractor.

“After Sept. 11, 2001, we became an integral partner with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to ensure the safety and security of our citizens,” says Craig. “We’ve worked with the U.S. Department of Justice in reviewing, translating, and transcribing tapes in support of the war effort.”

Speaking of Staffing

To appropriately service Geneva Worldwide’s contracts, the firm is increasing its staff.

“We’ve invested quite a bit in retaining a team of talented bid writers to help procure

“Our success has allowed us to continually service our existing clients and develop new relationships through our network of contracts.”

—Craig Buckstein
chief operating officer

various contracts,” says Craig. “We’re hiring additional bid writers for new business developments, and we’re developing new commission schedules based on performance wherein net profits would play more of a role than gross revenues.”

Joel says the company recently moved into a new 8,000-square-foot building to accommodate the anticipated influx of new employees. The company currently employs more than 25 core employees

and an average of 800 to 1,000 temporary and contract employees each year.

A strong staff helps the company fulfill its contractual obligations and opens the door for new opportunities.

“We have hundreds of linguists working in a calendar year, from telephonic interpreters to on-site interpreters to document translators, who are located around the country,” says Craig. “Our success has allowed us to continually service our existing clients and develop new relationships through our network of contracts.”

Talking Technology

Staying on top of technological advancements and incorporating them into the firm is another mechanism that Geneva Worldwide uses to effectively service its contracts.

“We made a significant investment in computer-aided translation tools over the years, which has given us the ability to handle volume translation, reuse previous translations, and keep text consistent for our clients,” says Craig. ➤

He asserts that voice recognition software, videoconferencing technology, and computer-assisted tools help the firm's temporary and contract employees complete their assignments with greater ease and efficiency.

"New technologies help us take translations completed in the past and bring them up so that translators don't have to retranslate certain things. It gives us the ability to deliver translation services quicker, cheaper, and more effectively,

and helps us become a better company. Technology helps us get a leg up on the competition and allows us to provide cost-effective services."

Craig is quick to point out that the human touch is still an essential element in Geneva's work. "Technology doesn't replace the need for human translation. It simply makes the job easier for contractors, who can use previous translations over and over again."

Proclaiming Progress

"Innovation, creativity, and change are what we keep in mind," says Joel when asked about efforts to grow the company. "We're always trying new things to grow."

Craig says the company is not content to rest on its laurels basking in the success of prior accomplishments. "There's a lot of opportunity in a globalized world and a great need for our services. There are new opportunities around every corner," he says.

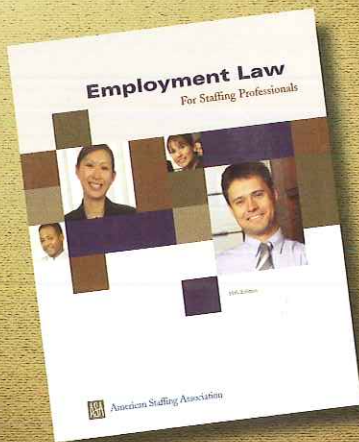
Acquisitions and mergers, partnering, subcontracting, adding offices, and expanding Geneva Worldwide's sales force are a few steps the company will take to keep clients talking about them for years to come. ■

Anna Degraffinreid is publications coordinator for the American Staffing Association. To comment on this article, e-mail success@americanstaffing.net.

The Fast Track

The Fast Track features interviews with industry leaders from some of the companies on *Inc.* magazine's list of the 5,000 fastest-growing private companies in the U.S. This magazine department provides an opportunity for readers to learn more about the tactics that have helped these companies achieve their high growth rates.

To qualify for the *Inc.* 5,000, companies must be U.S.-based, privately held, and independent (not subsidiaries of larger companies). The ranking is based on percentage of revenue growth from 2004 (which must have been at least \$200,000) through 2007 (which must be greater than \$2 million).



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