

McINTYRE'S INSTALLERS INSTILL CONFIDENCE

Now one of the largest independent full-service office installation and asset management firms in Canada, McIntyre Group relies on extensive training and advanced software to get the job done right

BY PAMELA YOUNG

In the early 1980s, Dean McIntyre just happened to have a father in the roofing business and a next-door neighbour who worked as a facility manager for Xerox. He more or less fell into a pattern of working for his dad in the summers, when roofers are busiest, and handling a variety of jobs for Xerox in the cooler months: maintenance work originally, and then more and more to do with office furniture installation. Mr. McIntyre is now the president of a 130-person company that evolved out of his off-season work experience, and there is nothing happenstance about its success. Based in Ayr, Ontario (just south of Kitchener), McIntyre Group Office Services Inc. generated \$12 million in revenue in its most

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recent fiscal year and is now one of the largest independent full-service office installation and asset management firms in Canada. Since 2004, the company has been the only Canadian member of Facilities Services Network, an international best-practices-oriented industry leaders group specializing in the management, benchmarking, installation and care of contract furniture.

Founded in 1984, McIntyre Group has branch offices in Mississauga and Calgary and offers a range of services that encompasses deliveries and distribution, project management, commercial moving, and furniture repair and refurbishing. Concentrating in specialty services, such as laboratory-furniture and architectural-wall installations, has been integral to the firm's growth. McIntyre Group installs demountable wall systems produced by Teknion, DIRTT Environmental Solutions, Haworth and many other manufacturers, and is playing a key role in one of the world's largest architectural wall installations, now in progress at The Bow in Calgary. When completed in

2012, this new office tower will contain more than 100,000 linear feet of Teknion's Altos demountable walls. McIntyre Group is the logistics and project management partner, which involves coordinating with Teknion and another firm that in this case is handling the actual installation of The Bow's architectural walls. (This project required more than one service provider to complete due to its size.) "Everything ships in from Toronto and comes through our warehouse in Calgary," Mr. McIntyre explains. "We inventory it and then we reload it onto our vehicles, ship it down to the site, and unload and place it into the building in the middle of the night, so that it's ready for the installation company." Hundreds of trailers deliver Altos walls to the warehouse and are then reloaded for the site as the schedule requires. There is now such a need for experienced installers in Western Canada that Ontario-based teams from McIntyre Group often relocate to cities such as Edmonton or Calgary for weeks at a time to complete a large job. The firm currently has 20 staff from Ontario working in Alberta on three different sites.

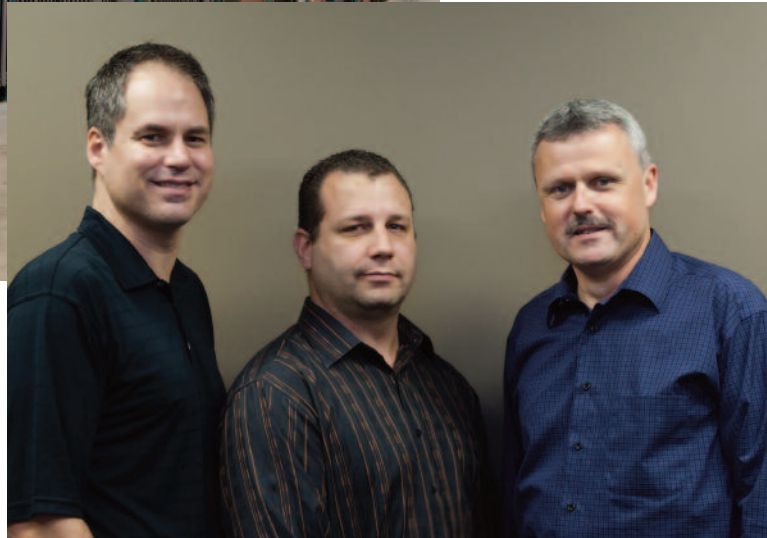
One of the biggest growth areas for McIntyre Group in recent years has been asset management, which now accounts for one quarter of its revenues; although the company's warehousing capabilities were modest in its early years, it now has 225,000 square feet of warehouse space in total under asset management for its clients at its Calgary, Mississauga and Ayr locations. Purchasing SnapTracker, the asset management software application developed by Toronto-based KiSP, has enabled McIntyre Group to offer its clients asset management services that go way beyond



In addition to installing office furniture from a wide range of manufacturers, McIntyre Group has acquired particular expertise in the installation of architectural walls and lab furniture.



▶ McIntyre Group inventories clients' property stored at its 225,000 square feet of warehouse space in Ontario and Alberta with SnapTracker software. Right (L to R): Carl Clappison, CFO; Steve Shepard, Ontario Operations Manager; and Dean McIntyre, President.



basic warehouse storage. “In a typical installer’s warehouse, there’s no program or process in place,” Mr. McIntyre says. “You might be storing furniture there, but you probably don’t know what you have. The business has changed a great deal, especially in the last three years. It’s incumbent upon us to help our customers reutilize what they have before they go and purchase new furniture. Using the software and the expertise that we’ve built, when the client asks us, ‘What can we build with this?’ we can tell them. We build them typical workstations within the software so that they can go online, use the online interface and pick a workstation out. They typically aren’t going to know all the components they require to build a workstation, so we try to simplify that process for them.” (McIntyre Group also uses SnapTracker to inventory components on jobs such as the architectural wall installation at The Bow.)

Carl Clappison, McIntyre Group’s CFO, adds that this advanced asset management software can also help clients document their environmentally responsible redeployment of assets such as workstation components. “It allows us to quantify what has been redeployed over a period of time,” he says. “We can provide them with quarterly reports that tell them how many pieces came into the warehouse, how many pieces went out, what the list value of that product was, and what their cost avoidance was by reutilizing it.”

Over the years, placing a strong emphasis on technical and leadership training for its employees has helped McIntyre Group weather setbacks ranging from the millennial dot.com bust to the more general economic meltdown of 2008 and emerge ready for re-growth. Mr. McIntyre credits Ontario Operations Manager Steve Shepard and Alberta General Manager Jerry O’Brien with tightening and streamlining processes in ways that speeded the company’s recovery from the sharp downturn of ’08.

Working with Soluteo, a Research in Motion partner, to develop of an integrated, in-house software program called Field Force Automation (FFA) has also helped McIntyre Group hone its competitive edge. “Essentially, FFA captures the process from beginning to end,” Mr. Clappison says. The program can generate a quote, convert it into a work order and schedule the work order. Through hand-held devices in the field, it’s also used for time capture for the employees on the job, leading to payroll entries, and for visual- and text-based documentation for uses such as damage reports, completion reports and change orders.

In addition to decades of experience in installation and asset management, McIntyre Group now has a noteworthy connection to the manufacturing side of the contract furniture business. Jerry O’Brien, who has headed the company’s sales and operations in Alberta since 1990, has designed and patented a folding workstation intended for quick deployment in settings ranging from large offices embarking on a restacking program to a temporary field office for emergency response; it installs in about 30 seconds, requiring no tools. Now manufactured in Ontario by a company called Swiftspace, the workstation was introduced in September 2011 at IIDEX/NeoCon Canada, where it received a Gold product innovation award. (See p. 25). McIntyre Group is an authorized Swiftspace rental company. As its fleet of rental stations goes into service, it’s interesting to reflect on the fact that Dean McIntyre’s decision to come down off the roof and go into the installation business has had a significant impact on a great many Canadian workplaces. | **CFM&D**