

Barrington firm in transition

By Clynton Namuo, *Union Leader* Correspondent—July 2006

BARRINGTON—Cubicles have long been maligned for their lack of space and privacy, but for a local public relations firm a move to new workplace, complete with the one-person compartments, will be like settling into the corner office.

Rapid growth has forced the six women employees of Bisson Barcelona to work in a 200-square foot space so small that even leaning back in one's chair had become a luxury foreign to them. Their office: the dining room of company owner and founder Traci Bisson.

A year ago, Bisson was the firm's sole employee, but after tripling her client list and doubling revenue, to an expected \$400,000 a year in 2007, more employees were needed.

Now more space is needed, and with an August move planned for a soon-to-be-finished, nearly 900-square-foot office on Route 125 in Barrington, Bisson Barcelona's employees are already looking back fondly upon the time spent working nearly on top of one another.

"We get so much more accomplished when we're together," said Shannon Hill, one of the firm's publicists.

Being close allows all the employees to communicate better and makes it easy to bounce ideas off one another, Hill said. Still, that communication can be a problem when privacy is needed, such as during phone calls, and each has had to adapt.

E-mail has become the preferred means of communication when others are on the phone. Having more than one person on the phone poses its challenges as well, with one person usually having to take a cordless phone into another room, usually the kitchen or family room.

Publicist Donna Marsh previously worked in a cubicle and sometimes laments the loss of space.

"You did feel crowded and you had no idea how lucky you were to have that space," she said.

Working out of one's home poses other challenges as well, Bisson said, such as the impact her two son's snow days had on the workplace. One time her 6-year-old, Jacob, was trying to show a picture he had drawn to Hill, while she was on the phone pitching a story to the business editor of the *L.A. Times*.

Staying late at work also is a bit of a no-no as Bisson's husband and two sons are in the house in the evening. Also, it's pretty much impossible to arrive late for work without anyone noticing.

Then, there is housework. While a normal office might share duties such as cleaning out the fridge or emptying the trash, Bisson said she just doesn't feel right asking others to do that in her own home. Despite it all, all the employees say they've enjoyed working closely and mostly positive things to say about working out of Bisson's home.

Bisson has taken out a loan to buy the approximately \$134,000 office space they're moving to next month and expects to add even more employees next year.

This time, finding room for an extra desk shouldn't be a problem. ■



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