

## Distributor to expand to handle its growth

# Regional Distributors, Inc.



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Company leaders David and Tracy Scalen, center, are with their team at Regional Distributors.

### Company is adding to its 70,000-square-foot warehouse in the city

By **KERRY FELTNER**

Regional Distributors Inc. expects double-digit percent revenue growth and plans to expand its more than 70,000-square-foot location.

The firm, which has been operating for nearly two decades, was featured on the cover of the January/February edition of the national *Maintenance Sales News* magazine.

"Everyone's a potential customer so

we're always adding new lines," said David Scalen, vice president and general manager. "It used to be when we first started out we had a tough time getting vendors to sell to us, but now we have an ongoing challenge of picking the right ones."

Regional Distributors has a range of products spanning the janitorial and sanitary maintenance, food service disposables, packaging and ice cream supplies industry segments.

From 2004 to 2006, the firm made a series of acquisitions—Rochester Janitor Supplies Inc., Paper Distributors Inc. and Green Oaks Janitor Supply Inc.—which helped diversify the company's offerings.

"We've diversified our business because

at any one time a certain segment can start to decline, for whatever reason, so we have a lot to offer," Scalen said. "In the last few years it's been the yogurt shops that have really boomed. That whole category has really exploded, so that provided a lot of growth for us."

One market the firm is looking toward next is health care.

The company's some 4,000 clients range from universities to building service contractors to property maintenance companies. The bulk of its business is in Western New York.

Located on Mt. Read Boulevard, the company expects to expand its warehouse in the upcoming months to keep up with

growth.

The company employs 47 people with four based remotely and the rest in Rochester. This year a couple of employees are expected to join the staff.

Millennials have contributed greatly to the team, officials said.

“We recruit a lot of millennials. I think there’s this misnomer that they don’t want to work, but we’ve got some really hardworking young people that have really made a big impact on our business,” Scalen said. “They’re more adaptable to the new technology that we want to put in place, and I think it’s just easier for them to acclimate.”

The fresh perspective helps veterans of the industry stay relevant.

“They have a lot of new ideas that I think being seasoned we don’t (necessarily) understand the new technology or know about it—it’s a different perspective,” said Tracy Scalen, president and director of finance, and David Scalen’s wife.

In the past few years a focus has been on technology upgrades. One upgrade is for

the sales side of the business. Each salesperson now has an iPad with sophisticated software to be able to work with customers more efficiently.

“(We have) a real commitment to the technology,” said Mary Deacon, director of business operations and a 13-year veteran of the firm. “I know a lot of other companies don’t do that, and they don’t survive.”

The way companies can remain sought after is by becoming experts for their customers. The Internet has made the firm find new ways to become indispensable to clients, its leaders said.

“With the Internet, there are no more mysteries,” David Scalen said. “Anybody can Google anything and get that information, so we really have to provide specialized services for our customers. Our salespeople have to know a lot about the products we sell and offer some expertise that you just couldn’t readily obtain elsewhere.”

Regional Distributors will roll out some private-label products later this year.

“We have done this for years, beginning

with the Rochester Janitor acquisition,” Scalen said. “Our new focus is rebranding the products, expanding the line and adding a social mission component, which is supporting CDS Monarch Warrior Salute. We feel very strongly about supporting those that have served.”

A portion of proceeds from sales will go to support Warrior Salute, a service of CDS Monarch Inc. that helps veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and military sexual trauma.

“The whole idea behind a private label is to reinforce our brand,” Scalen said. “We have a brand we want to reinforce, but we wanted to give back to those that really provide our liberty ... (who) give us the opportunity to prosper here.”

The business is on track for 2015 so far, officials say.

“When we first started out, we always had a vision and we worked every day towards that vision,” Scalen said. “Our main focus is on servicing our customers; that’s why we have been successful.”

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