

**For immediate release**

October 28, 2004

**For more information contact:**

**Rick Voigt, (216) 267-5000**

**Today's Business Products reaches 20-year milestone**

**Family-owned office products and furniture dealer thrives in big box environment**

CLEVELAND - Today's Business Products (TBP) started before the "big box" revolution in the office supplies market. Despite the presence of the national retailers, Today's Business Products continues to grow.

The family-owned local office product and furniture supplier will celebrate its 20-year anniversary on November 1. TBP, located in Parma, sells office supplies, including computer products and new and used office furniture. From a small leased warehouse 20 years ago, TBP has grown into a company with almost \$10 million in annual sales and 30 employees. It is one of only two major privately-owned office products dealers in Northeast Ohio.

"When we started the business 20 years ago our goal was to make it to our first anniversary," said Rick Voigt, owner of TBP. "We weren't looking down the road to a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But looking back now, what a wonderful experience it has been as an entrepreneur to see what we have accomplished."

Voigt and his father, Don, started the business in November 1984. Don Voigt was a veteran in the office supply business, having spent more than 30 years selling primarily carbon paper and typewriter ribbons for two companies before copy machines and computers became commonplace. After attending Bowling Green State University, Rick joined his father, selling on commission for Copy-Aid, a local supplier, in 1982. Two years later, they were forced out by the company.

*(Continued)*

"I interviewed with a major competitor and almost went to work there when I asked Dad what he planned to do," Rick Voigt recalled. "He said, 'I'm 52 years old. Who's going to hire me?' He was determined to start his own company. He asked me, 'Are you in or not?' That was the beginning. He refinanced his house and borrowed some money. It was a true entrepreneur story. He risked it all."

The relationships the Voigts cultivated over the years paid immediate dividends for their new endeavor.

"The relationship a business has with its customers is through the salesman," Rick Voigt said. "When we left Copy-Aid, the customers continued to ask for us. Within a week after we started the company we had to hire a guy to run the warehouse."

TBP started with a 6,000 square-foot warehouse in Brook Park, then expanded in 1989 into a 14,000-foot facility, also in Brook Park. In 2000 the company purchased and moved into its present 40,000 square-foot building on Snow Road. The building houses an 8,000 square-foot mid-market office furniture showroom, a 1,000 square-foot classroom furniture showroom and an additional 5,000 square-foot used/clearance area.

In April, the company expanded its client base into the East Side with the acquisition of Mayfield Heights-based Office Emporium. The company plans to open an East Side showroom soon.

In 1986, two years after TBP was created, the business of office supply retailing changed with the establishment of the national chains, like Office Max and Staples. In a market now dominated by national chains, TBP competes by utilizing the leverage of a purchasing cooperative with 4,000 independent dealers worldwide.

"With the purchasing group, we actually have more purchasing power than the chains have," Rick Voigt said. "BPGI (Business Products Group International) makes \$12 billion in annual purchases. Our purchasing power is greater than the chains and we don't have the overhead they do, so we can offer better prices to our customers."

Plus, he said, buying from a local business supports the local community.

*(Continued)*

"Eighty percent of what you spend at a national chain store leaves the community immediately," Voigt said. "But when you spend a dollar at a locally-owned business it turns over between six and 15 times before it leaves the community. The national corporations don't care about the local community, but we live and work here."

Looking ahead, Voigt expects continued growth for the family-operated firm. While planning for a possible new showroom on the East Side, more acquisitions are possible.

"We are very aggressive and we plan to grow," said Rick Voigt.

Don Voigt now spends much of his time in semi-retirement living in Florida with his wife Mary. But he is still active in the company he co-founded. Rick Voigt purchased Don and Mary's shares of TBP five years ago. Other family members are involved in the company as well. Rick's younger brothers, John and Paul, work full time at TBP while older brother Ken works part time, filling in when more help is needed.

The family atmosphere makes for a comfortable environment for TBP's employees. Karen Cipalla, the first employee hired by the Voigts in 1984, is still with the company. TBP's first salesman, Phil Kish, also remains on board.

"Hopefully in another 20 years my kids will be running the business and I'll be able to spend half my time in retirement like my dad is doing now," Rick Voigt said. "That's what we all work for, right?"

Today's Business Products focuses on its core business principles of providing quality service, knowledge, and products to its customers. More than 1,000 clients call on TBP for office supplies, computer products, new and used furniture, system and design. The company strives to be involved in such organizations as Rotary, Boy Scouts of America and various Chambers of Commerce throughout Ohio.

Today's Business Products is located at the corner of Snow Road and W. 130<sup>th</sup> Street in Parma, Ohio. Phone: 216-267-5000. Fax 216-267-5555. Visit TBP on the Web at [www.todaysbusinessproducts.com](http://www.todaysbusinessproducts.com) or email [info@todaysbp.com](mailto:info@todaysbp.com).

###