

SMALL BUSINESS

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Company puts seniors in motion

INNOVATION | North Van firm helps older people change residence

BY BRIAN MORTON
VANCOUVER SUN

Scott Morrison got the idea for a full-service Vancouver moving company for seniors from his mother's experience in Calgary.

"She's 80 years old and decided to move from assisted living back to her own apartment," Morrison, president of Transitions for Vancouver, said in an interview.

"She read about Transitions and hired [the company]. She was going on and on about the service. Everything was done for her. So I decided to check it out."

Morrison, who had previously worked in economic development for the provincial government, contacted Transitions founder Dawn Rennie, who established the company in Winnipeg in 2002 and expanded to several cities.

Morrison then worked out a business arrangement to set up his own North Vancouver-based company with the Transitions name (move-withtransitions.com) as a one-stop full-service facilitator for organizing and coordinating moves for seniors in Metro Vancouver.

Morrison said he was helped by the fact that his in-laws own SelfCare, a home health care provider in Metro Vancouver, which helped him identify the market demand for Transitions.

Morrison's wife Kandice does the company's marketing and planning.

He said that since 2002, the parent organization has completed more than 600 moves across western Canada,



BILL KEAY/VANCOUVER SUN

Managing partners Kandice Morrison and Scott Morrison of Transitions Moving of North Vancouver, in front of a Ferguson Moving van. Transitions has been helping seniors move since last November.

including 150 in the past year.

Helping set up the moving van is only part of the service. The company is also involved in sorting, packing, cleaning and setting up television, cable and phone service in the new home, hanging pictures, forwarding mail, shipping heirlooms to family, gardening and repairs.

Morrison said a lot of time is spent simply helping seniors sort their "stuff" — things that have often accumulated over decades — and identifying ways to recycle and reuse items that won't fit into their new homes.

Morrison, 54, invested about \$60,000 in startup costs for training, salary, marketing materials, ads, trade

shows and booth posters, chamber of commerce membership and moving materials.

He said that although his business is similar to a franchise, he owns the Vancouver company and pays monthly fees to Rennie, but no royalties.

Morrison said seniors often have a

Transitions

- Date formed: Nov. 1, 2008
- Startup costs: \$60,000
- Cost per move: between \$3,000 and \$4,000
- Number of moves by Transitions in western Canada over the past year: 150
- Website: www.movewithtransitions.com

very difficult time managing moves, especially if they've lived in the same home for decades and their children are too busy to help, or live elsewhere. "It's a logistical nightmare [for seniors]. And there's often a lot of grieving involved."

He said that starting a business in a time of economic turmoil was not a deterrent, especially because of Canada's aging population. "It's not recession-proof, but this is a market that will keep expanding. It's not really related to the economy."

Morrison, who started Transitions for Vancouver in November and charges between \$3,000 and \$4,000 for a move, has just one contract so far. But he said he expects that number to grow to 12 contracts by the end of the year and about 80 per year in five years.

He said advertising is key to getting his business off the ground and that he's getting the word around by searching out organizations and professions — such as journals for occupational therapists — that cater to seniors.

"We have to do a lot more marketing," he said. "But where do you spend your marketing budget, in the printed press or at trade shows?"

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