



# Duplicating Products

## Northeast Georgia dealership celebrates 50 years

by: Elizabeth Marvel, Office Technology

**B**TA member dealership Duplicating Products, based in Gainesville, Georgia, recently celebrated a significant milestone in its history — 50 years in the business. Founded in 1974 by Ralph Nix, the company has evolved its product and services offerings over the years but, today, continues to have a document-centric focus.

Ralph started in the office technology industry working for A.B. Dick Company in its warehouse. He eventually moved into a sales position where he excelled — even winning a national sales award. Ralph then went through the service side of the business, giving him a well-rounded education on A.B. Dick's products. In 1974, Ralph moved his family (his wife, Marquita, their two boys and twin girls) from Atlanta, Georgia, to Gainesville, and started Duplicating Products as an A.B. Dick dealership. In 1978, as copiers were coming onto the scene, the company took on Savin and Saxon machines.

“At the time we took on copy machines, I was nine years old,” says Matt Nix, Ralph’s youngest son and current president of Duplicating Products, recalling his childhood in the business. “I had two-year-old twin sisters and an older brother who was 11. I can remember as kids, my siblings and I would be carrying paper around the warehouse, painting the walls, just doing whatever needed to be done.”

Tragedy hit the Nixes nine years after the company’s founding, changing the dynamic of the family and the business. “So my mom was, for the most part, a stay-at-home mom,” Matt says. “That is relevant because in 1983, my father died of a heart attack. My mother found herself with a whole family to take care of and a business that needed someone to run it. [Prior to Ralph’s death] she had answered phones and kept the books a little bit, but she was much more of a mom than she was a businessperson.

“But while my dad was a great salesperson, she turned out to be an incredible businessperson,” Matt continues. “Every big decision she made over the course of two decades she got right. She did a really great job and evolved from being a mom who got saddled with the business to an innovator and a business leader who built a great company.”

After going to college at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Matt worked in another industry for a couple of years before he began working full-time for his mom at Duplicating Products in 1988. “We worked together for more than 20 years,” Matt says, recalling the time he and his mom spent in the business together. “It was a great time. She was the boss and the business leader, and I was able to build a good, solid sales team.



*Top photo: Matt Nix (far left), president, Chad Gammon (third from left), COO, and Witt Nix (far right), director of business development, pose for a photo with prize drawing winners at Duplicating Products’ 50th anniversary celebration. Bottom photo: Founder Ralph Nix in the Duplicating Products’ showroom in 1982.*



We had a partnership and it was a really great time to grow the business, work with my mom and have success together.”

Marquita ran the company until her retirement in 2010, when Matt took over the business. Prior to becoming president, he served in sales-centric positions in the company. “In 1990, we found ourselves with a sales force of just a couple of people,” Matt says. “So, for better or for worse, I started building our sales team. I hired a very young guy, Rodney Smith, straight out of college in 1990. We grew up driving each other to sell more and grow the business. And he’s still with me and is as good a sales rep as I could ever imagine having. He’s been a great contributor and is a valuable part of our team, our culture and our community. He has been doing it for 34 years and works harder and has more good ideas than I could ever come up with.”

Long-tenured employees like Smith are common at Duplicating Products, which gives you an idea of the company’s culture. “There are so many places people could leave and go, but as I mentioned, Rodney has been here 34 years and I’ve got technicians who’ve been here for 45, 40 and 35 years,” Matt says. “So I think we’re treating people well, and that works both ways — from a company standpoint and how we treat our team, but also from our team members’ standpoints and

how they treat our customers and our company as well.

"Years ago we adopted a slogan: 'We'll do what we say we'll do,'" Matt continues. "I don't get upset if our profit margins aren't the best or if equipment needs to perform better. I get most concerned when I feel like we're not delivering what we promised to deliver. I'm thankful I have almost no recollection of any customer ever saying, 'You didn't do what you said you were going to do.'"

Today, Duplicating Products has about 60 employees who work a territory of 22 counties in the north-east corner of Georgia. Headquartered in Gainesville, the company also has a second office in Suwanee, Georgia. "We have looked into geographic expansion, but this has been a great area for us," Matt says. "I've always felt like we could grow as much within our territory as we could by getting outside of it."

Duplicating Products is primarily a Ricoh and Canon dealership. "Our primary brands and products are Ricoh and Canon multifunction systems," Matt says. "I say Ricoh because we've been a Savin dealership since 1978, and Savin became Ricoh. We've also been a Canon dealership since 1993. So we've had these two lines as good business partners for more than three decades.

"We're still very document-centric," he continues. "We do handle some of their peripheral products, whether they are scanners, white boards, plotters, etc., but our business is still very much built around the documents, the solutions and software that are tied to the multifunction devices we sell. So, we may have a solution that enhances the scanning capabilities of the MFP, or we may be using software that manages workflow or print volumes. The core of our business is still very much copiers, but we do look at and consider alternatives. For example, we took on mailing last year and we do handle HP products, and folding and finishing products from Formax."

Matt goes on to explain the company's document-centric focus. "What I have found historically over the years is that the multifunction systems are really what we do well, what my salespeople are comfortable with and where my service team seems comfortable," he says. "There's always enough opportunity to offer more products, but we can move the needle more individually and collectively by continuing to grow that copier, printer and related products business. I don't want to be the old guy stuck in the old ways, but I don't want to quit doing what we do so well. So, we're trying to balance that."

Jan. 1, 2024, was the company's 50th anniversary, and it has been honoring that milestone via print and digital advertising throughout the year. The company also held an in-person celebration with the local chamber of commerce on Sept. 24, inviting employees and customers to thank them for their support during the last 50 years. "It was a great event and we had more

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than 200 people in attendance," Matt says. "Kit Dunlap, the executive director of the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce, said it was the best after-hours event they've ever held."

After 50 successful years in the business, why does Duplicating Products stand out from its competitors? "I think the keys for us are: We want to work hard, tell people the truth and give our customers a great experience through all the technology," Matt says. "I think that's one of the biggest

things you have to recognize — the technology is going to continue to change. There are certainly some changes going on, but I think there's also so much more we can deliver as solutions to our clients, whether it's paper, electronic or whatever. The harder you work, the luckier you get. So, we continue to work hard and ride out the technology changes and try to look at other opportunities. But I think you don't try to force that — you let it come to you so you find the right people and the right opportunities to fit your business.

"We focus more on being steady rather than being on the bleeding edge," he continues. "I would rather be a second or third adopter, and I think from a business standpoint, that has enabled us to continue steady growth. I'm going to try to add good people as opposed to chasing the latest shiny thing, and stand behind our products and not get out there where we have to apologize for too much."

Looking to the future, Matt sees the next generation as essential to Duplicating Products' success. "I have a son, Witt, who has been back in the business for four years now," he says. "He's been on the same path that I was on, coming in in sales, learning the business and taking on some more leadership roles. But we've also brought in a good number of young people just this year. I'm excited about the opportunity for them to become great sales reps or marketing people. I think the transition to the next generation is really taking hold to where, in the next 10 years, those folks will become the people who understand the new technology and will lead us to more solutions or a new direction from a product standpoint.

"But I think with most new things that we have been successful with over the years, you need somebody to take it on as a champion, and I think by having these younger generations on board, we'll grow because they're going to be hungry," he continues. "I will have much more faith and be willing to stand behind and help them with their ideas and ambitions than I will be in my ability to come up with what's next and great. So, that's exciting." ■

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