

## Evolving products, priorities

Levys' business, Five Thousand Forms, is expanding into 'green' products.



DENISE SANCHEZ, Allentown Morning Call, July 17, 2007

**Herb Levy, president of Five Thousand Forms, Inc., his wife, Linda, secretary-treasurer, and their daughter, Lizabeth, account executive, (left) in their office in Fogelsville.**

By Sam Kennedy | Of The Morning Call

*August 6, 2007*

Customers of Five Thousand Forms often ask Herb and Linda Levy what the name of their Fogelsville business has to do with key chains, coffee mugs and baseball caps.

Those are just a few of the myriad promotional products the husband and wife team sells to other businesses in and beyond the Lehigh Valley.

But the name actually refers to a very different line of work: printing the kind of custom paperwork -- slips, labels, envelopes -- that is involved in business transactions.

Printing was Five Thousand Forms' original focus in 1973, when the Levys launched the business. Promotional products didn't come about for another 15 years.

The story of Five Thousands Forms, thus, is one of an evolving family business.

Today, it has 18 employees, including two of the Levys' three daughters. One daughter opened a sales office north of San Francisco last month.

Five Thousand Forms' customer base spans 42 states, including 64 of the 67 counties in Pennsylvania, according to Herb Levy. He declined to disclose annual revenues.

"Customer service -- that's what it's all about," he said. He then gave an example of what he meant:

PPL Corp. of Allentown called Five Thousand Forms on a recent Friday afternoon in search of something to give to participants of a safety conference the following Monday.

Five Thousand Forms, which functions as a distributor of promotional products manufactured elsewhere, quickly came up with a short list of options. PPL went with a mini-flashlight key chain attachment in the shape of a hard hat. A box of the key

chains -- with the PPL logo emblazoned on the side of each hard hat -- was shipped by day's end.

"You can't beat that," Herb Levy said.

Herb Levy, 64, is the president and public face of Five Thousand Forms. "I like working with people and building relationships," he said. Linda Levy, 59, is secretary-treasurer.

Life partners and business partners at once, the couple often talk about work at home. "We're accustomed to having those discussions over the dinner table," Linda said.

Herb credits his wife with coming up with the idea of transferring their printing and graphic arts expertise from forms to promotional products.

They started in 1989 with a few simple giveaways, such as magnets and T-shirts. Since then, their product line has expanded.

Some of the 750,000 items distributed by Five Thousand Forms are on display in the company's office. There are golf tees, golf balls and golf towels; T-shirts, polo shirts and dress shirts; pens, notebook pads and calculators.

"We print on anything," Herb Levy said.

More and more, that means printing on environmentally friendly products, as a second generation of Levys pushes the family business in a new direction.

Lizabeth Levy, 31, is using the company's Web site, <http://www.givemefive.com>, to promote apparel made from recycled or organic fibers and chlorine-free paper with soy ink printing.

She said her sister, Jessica Levy Goebel, 29, who opened the California office, is tapping a ready market for all things green. She believes it's only a matter of time before the same is true here.

"On the West Coast, the customers know they want those products," Goebel explained. "On the East Coast, the customers are beginning to take an interest."

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