

# Ruby Receptionists

Providing friendly voices for a wide base of clients

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Ruby Receptionists' success lies in something so basic yet appreciated by so many — the courtesy of a real human being answering the telephone.

"When I started the company I was really focused on the technology of answering calls,

but our clients kept telling us that they were more concerned about having a friendly voice and someone who could be helpful to callers," said Ruby President Jill Nelson.

Nelson started Ruby Receptionists in

2003 to provide remote call-connecting and other personalized administrative services to small companies and home-based businesses across the country. These "virtual receptionists" answer calls from an office in the Pearl District, where Nelson originally planned to open executive suites for professionals who needed to rent office space.

"At the time the office market was pretty soft and the cost of doing a build-out of

Class A office space was out of reach for me, so I just started thinking of the benefits an office provided, especially the receptionist piece," she said.

Nelson herself worked as a receptionist and office manager for five years after graduating from college.

"And, of course, I was one of the first Ruby Receptionists as well," she said.

The company, once called WorkSource Inc., now has 34 employees who take calls for clients and either transfer the calls through, send them to voicemail or take messages manually, depending on the client's preference. Other options include text messages, e-mails or faxed messages. Ruby's team also makes return calls on behalf of its clients. The calls range from appointment reminders to more detailed information such as descriptions of its clients' services and directions to their offices.

Ruby's annual revenue has grown more than 200 percent from \$592,000 in 2005 to \$1.8 million in 2007. Its clients include Peterson Law Offices, Bassett Furniture Direct and Urban Forest Professionals as well as a host of other law firms, consultants, certified public accountants, non-profit organizations and health care practitioners.

Nelson attributes the company's growth to a "stellar group of receptionists" who provide a basic but essential service and a niche based on the reality that missed phone calls often equal missed opportunities.

Ruby Receptionists differs from traditional answering services because its receptionists become more like off-site staff for clients rather than providing imper-



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Ruby's Jill Nelson, center, and team serve as 'virtual receptionists' from their Pearl District office.

sonal and limited service. And, given that an estimated 60 percent of consumers become angry or frustrated using an automated telephone, machines are quickly falling out of favor, Nelson said.

She credited Ruby Receptionists not only with reducing her clients' business costs, but improving their bottom line. While an employee must take lunch breaks and vacations and may call in sick or run late for work, Ruby receptionists

are always available to take calls.

"We really cater to small businesses and the professional markets that are at a level where their call volume maybe doesn't justify a full-time receptionist, but they don't want their customers to have to deal with an automated system," Nelson said. "A computer can transfer calls, but an old-fashioned greeting by a warm, friendly voice is what really sets us apart."

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