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BUSINESS PROFILE

Numbers add up for company

By Luci Scott

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Carolyn Brown has a paperless accounting company.

The CEO of Chandler-based The Accountant's Office runs a virtual company in which she and her seven employees all work at home on computers, doing accounting and paying bills for businesses and individuals.

Except for her full-time operations manager (her daughter), her employees are stay-at-home mothers

who range from bookkeepers to CPAs. At the end of the year, she gives clients all their records on CD.

"You have to keep those records," she said. "Our clients love that (CD)."

She has never advertised and has found clients by referrals from CPAs, financial planners and other clients. She started the business five years ago and spent the first four months devising

systems to make the business operate smoothly.

"We are very systematized, which provides consistency and security," she said. "We are very, very security conscious."

Her nationwide clients range from a single nurse to a multimillion-dollar company.

When Brown's late husband began their first accounting service in 1973, he began it by sharing time on their CPA's computer.

In her current business, one of her best memories is the day she found seven new clients.

"I have several clients who have multiple businesses. One day, I had one who I signed up for personal (work) and her four businesses. It made for a very good day. It was only three appointments and seven businesses."

Brown says the biggest mistake she made was letting her overhead get too high.

"I run my business 'lean and mean' by maximizing technology and reducing overhead," she said.

The mistake she sees many business

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owners make is trying to keep too much control, especially over money.

"They spend their valuable time doing minutiae, day-to-day handling of the financial side, when they could spend it making the business grow."

Brown, a native of Omaha, spent 10 years in San Diego, where she worked as chief operating officer of the Cathcart Institute, a professional speaking and training operation.

Brown is the immediate past president of the active Phoenix chapter of NAWBO, the National Association of Women Business Owners.

"The two most beautiful words in the English language are past president," she said, laughing. "I'm happy to be a has-been."



Carolyn Brown