

## Staffing for success

By: **CRISSA SHOEMAKER** (Tue, Jun/14/2005)

Quite a few people think Karl Schneider was crazy to give up a guaranteed six-figure salary. But his family was far more important to him.

It was almost as crazy to start a staffing firm for temporary technology consultants at a time when the industry wasn't doing all that well. But Schneider saw an opportunity.

A little more than a year after starting Thomas-Matthew Associates, Schneider, of Newtown Township, is on his way back to that six-figure salary. And his three sons enjoy getting to spend a lot more time with him.

"I saw myself at a certain age saying, 'Where am I going to be in 10 years?' " said Schneider, 40. "It wasn't at the company I was at. It was more doing it for myself."

Thomas-Matthew Associates is named after Schneider's oldest son, 7-year-old Thomas, and Matthew, the son of Schneider's would-be business partner. When the partner dropped out, Schneider continued launching the company, which he is now calling TMA.

TMA specializes in providing companies with temporary high-end technical help. The employees work for the companies for months at a time, earning about \$60,000 to \$100,000 a year.

"Most companies like to have a workforce that can fluctuate due to demands of supply and work," said Schneider, who's been in the staffing business for more than a decade. "You never want to hear a Fortune 1000 company laying off 1,000 people. They can go to temporary help."

Because much technical work is project-related, many companies choose to hire temporary workers who have the latest training and know all about the newest products.

In his former life, Schneider was leaving his house at 7 each morning and not returning until 7 at night. That didn't leave him a lot of time to spend with Thomas and his 5-year-old twins, Daniel and Joseph.

Schneider started TMA in April 2004, as the IT staffing industry was back on the upswing. Companies had suffered massive losses following the boom years of the late 1990s and early 2000s, but were starting to get more business as the economy grew and businesses got smarter.

"I was waiting for the upswing," Schneider said. "I think I timed it pretty good. The last six months have been pretty good."

TMA has 15 consultants and a handful of in-house staff to run its office on Penns Trail in Newtown Township.

"It's easy to find people," he said. "To find the quality people is a little more challenging. The Internet has definitely developed an easy mechanism to transfer resumes and find people, but it's also made it a lot harder to find a needle in the haystack. The haystack is pretty big right now. To find that one person is a challenge."

Schneider now coaches two soccer teams and is an assistant baseball coach and the treasurer of the Council Rock Wrestling Club.

"Two years ago, I didn't do any of that," he said. "I left a full-time, six-figure salary. In 2004, I might have made \$20,000 that whole year. But 2005 is shaping up to match my income in 2003. It's all on my own."

Schneider said he has no regrets - except that if the economic climate had been better, he would have gone out on his own sooner.

"A lot of people say, 'What are you, crazy, giving up more or less \$100,000?'" he said. "But it's an investment in myself for the future."

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