

business trends

File This: Office Supply Superstore Has 15th Anniversary

(NAPSA)—Fifteen years ago, if you were a small business owner who had to quickly get information on your company to a prospect in another state, your best choice was an overnight delivery service. The fax machine, then in its infancy, was priced way beyond your budget. If you ran out of manila file folders, you called your office supply distributor and paid the going small customer rate of \$11 because you had no other convenient option.

Flash forward to 2001 and the small business owner who needs to get information quickly to a client in another state (or even another country) sends it by e-mail or on a fax machine that costs under \$100. Out of file folders? Many businesses just walk in, call in or log on to Staples where they pay about four dollars for the same file folders that cost eleven dollars fifteen years ago.

These are just some of the many changes that have made doing business simpler—and less costly—for small businesses and the self-employed since Staples opened the world's first office supplies superstore in the spring of 1986. The industry that Staples pioneered has enabled the nation's estimated

5.6 million small businesses and 10 million self-employed individuals to benefit from the same low prices on office supplies, furniture and business equipment that were once enjoyed only by large corporations.

“My goal when we launched the first Staples store was to cater to the needs of small business owners and to ultimately slash the cost and hassle of running an office,” says Thomas G. Stemberg, Staples chairman of the board and chief executive officer. “What was our core mission then remains our mission today and it's what enables Staples to serve a wide variety of customers the way they want to be served.”

The simple concept of offering the little guys the same low price that the big guys benefited from enabled the company to become only the sixth publicly-traded U.S. company to reach \$3 billion in annual sales in less than ten years.

Part of the reason behind this rapid success is that the superstore concept is not just a crowd-pleaser in the business world but has rapidly become a favorite with consumers who stock up their home offices and students needing school supplies.