

LEADER OF THE PACK

By Angela LoSasso

Reprinted from *New Business Opportunities*

A keen promotional sense helps entrepreneurs pack a better punch. Monica Thompson opened up a new market by offering her services to apartment managers.

Nearly 43 million Americans--roughly 18 percent of the population--moved from one housing unit to another in 1989, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. As America becomes an increasingly mobile society and free time a rare commodity, moving services are projected to boom.

HOME SWEET HOME

Many unpacking entrepreneurs see themselves as organizational consultants--giving tips on the what, how, and where of storage and organization--in addition to providing a much-needed moving service. This specialized niche within the moving industry picks up where the movers drop off. Unpackers unload boxes, organize belongings, hang paintings and arrange furniture--all to customer specifications.

ALL BOXED UP

The unpacking marketplace is a huge one. "Every year, between 450,000 and 500,000 people move for corporate reasons alone," says Peter Packer, of Runzheimer International, a

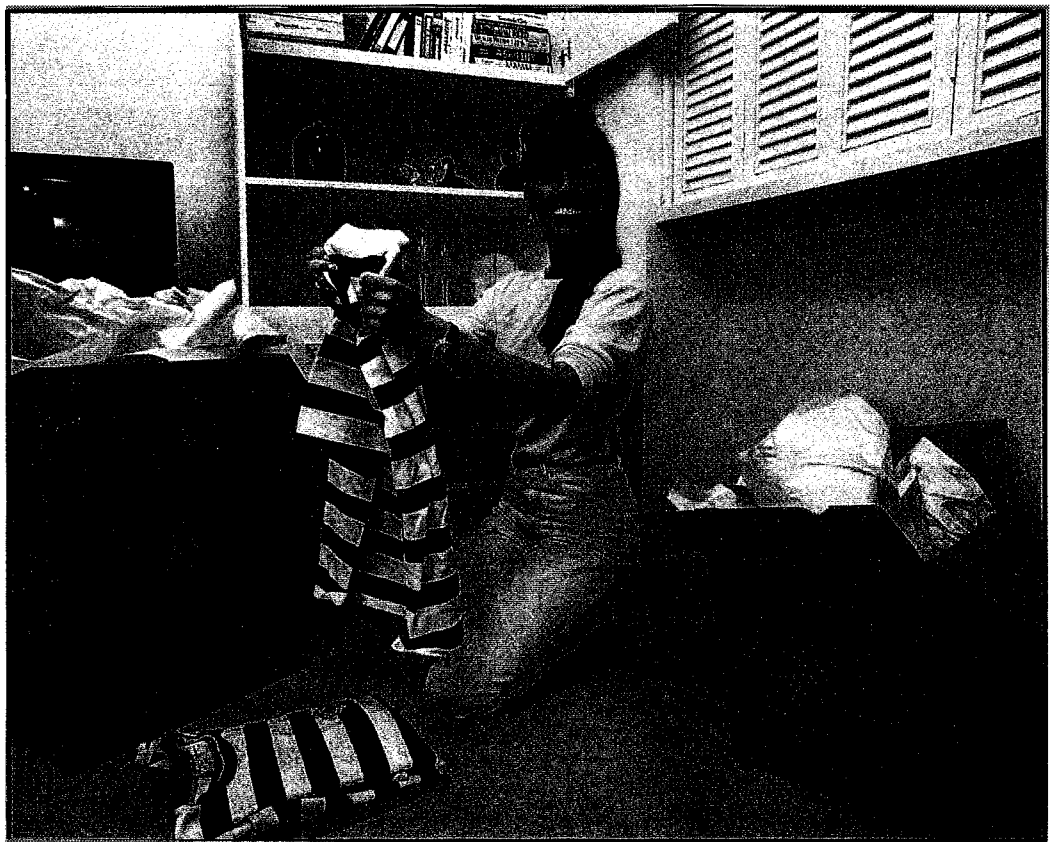


Photo: Matt Marton

Rochester Wisconsin-based management consultant firm. Many corporations offer moving services as an incentive for hiring and as a benefit for relocating employees. Unpacking entrepreneurs can expand their client base by working with moving companies, relocation specialists, real estate offices and human resources managers of local corporations.

In addition to working with moving companies, Monica Thompson of Chaos to Order, approaches apartment leasing managers in the Chicago area to offer her unpacking service as a move-in incentive. In fact, many managers like the idea so much they've added Chaos to Order's service as a bonus to new tenants. One apartment leasing manager wanted to show appreciation for her existing tenants, so she suggested Thompson's space-saving consulting and organizational services as a lease-renewal bonus.

Thompson also markets her business to local real estate offices. "Now, many real estate agents present my services as a closing gift," she says.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

Unpacking businesses are a logical add-on to the established moving industry. "Any service that makes moving easier, more convenient, and less stressful helps the industry," says George E. Bennett, spokesman for the American Movers Conference. Bennett projects a successful future for unpacking services. "It's something that makes sense for the customer," he says. "The market is there, and I believe a lot of our member agencies will add this type of service in the future."