

Winning Woolworth with tailormade software

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Last month, Kennesaw-based Retail Technologies Corp. (RTC) celebrated its first anniversary under new ownership by announcing a lucrative software license contract with Woolworth Corp.

The agreement is notable because it has the potential of reaching into the billions of dollars based on future work with the several foreign and domestic subsidiaries of Woolworth. But perhaps as significant is that the self-described "five busy guys" who were working from their basements, developed the type of software that the retail giant had been seeking for more than 10 years, according to Woolworth officials.

RTC's point-of-sale, tailormade software is "an integral part of our strate-



RTC's winning team: "five busy guys"

the flexibility to customize software and ultimately improve profit margins in stores like Woolworth Express, Kinney Shoes, Champs Sports and Afterthoughts Boutique. Ultimately, the point-of-sale software is helping Woolworth make more money because shoppers are able to move through check-out lines faster. That's due in part to RTC but also to the scanning equipment used on bar-coded merchandise.

RTC's five principals beat out some long-established competitors to win the Woolworth business. While neither Woolworth nor RTC will disclose how much the contract is worth, it is considered one of the largest software service agreements with a retailer.

For RTC, it represents the majority of its business, says Bruce Hicks, vice president for marketing and sales. RTC is also a partner with IBM in its venture with Woolworth. IBM systems are being used now by some Woolworth subsidiaries, like Kinney Shoes Canada, to run the RTC software known as Retailwerks. RTC and IBM are continuing to make joint business pitches to other retailers, says Hicks.

Steven Green and Brian McWhirter, both programmers for RTC, are primarily responsible for reviving the retail software company. As

Green explains, "We've been to hell and back." The present conditions are vastly improved, says Michael Warren, now president of RTC.

Woolworth had actually contracted for the Retailwerks software just to test it in the Kinney Shoes Canada and prototype Woolworth Express stores. After a successful test, Woolworth wanted to integrate the software in as many different store concepts as possible. But with a dying company — RTC — it looked like Woolworth's information services specialists were going to have to tell its corporate superiors that the chances of making the software available companywide were dwindling.

"That's when we got busy," explains Warren.

Warren and the four other principals including Douglas Walker, the financial officer, secured the financing to buy the company. After making a few other adjustments, including changing the name to RTC, the firm has grown to employ 16.

For Walker, who left a secure banking job to join RTC, today's successes are so sweet.

"I knew that with Retailwerks there was a plan to make this customized software a big part of a retailer's strategy. I took a chance and it's paying off," says Walker. ■

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gy to be competitive" and improve profit margins in its various stores, says a Woolworth spokesman.

The RTC contract gives Woolworth