

suite deals

Office centers widen the options for professionals and entrepreneurs.

By Mary Lou Smart
Photography by Ronald Dubick

All decked out

The Crexent Business Center, which is located in Bonita Springs' Riverview Corporate Center, also offers a high-end executive office experience with receptionists in uniform, a kitchen and coffee served throughout the day. Located on U.S. 41, Crexent has 92 offices, three conference rooms and a fully equipped exercise room. The building opened in 2003 and is 80 percent occupied.

The top rental in the building is \$2,600 for a suite consisting of three offices and a reception area. Small, 80-square-foot offices start as low as \$350 a month and come with call forwarding to cell phones.

"Many realtors just need a place to hang their license," says Tammy Plucker, manager.

Crexent is owned by H.J. Zimmerman and Associates, which owns multiple locations in the state. Howard Zimmerman, managing partner, entered the executive office business to avoid a colossal business failure and has found success along the way. In the early '80s, interest rates were going through the roof and his company had just completed a 25,000-square-foot building in Miami when what was supposed to have been his largest tenant went belly up.

"Besides our own corporate offices, we had no other tenants," he recalls. "We sat there with that empty building for six months before deciding to try something new."

Zimmerman had seen executive offices in the New York suburbs and convinced his partners to try a more upscale version. As an experiment, one-third of the building, 7,000 square feet, was converted to executive offices. When those rented within two months, they decided to convert another 20 percent of the building. When that parcel rented in one month, they decided to convert the entire building.

"My only regret is we didn't do it from the start," he says. "As a result it took two years to rent out that building. We've had 95 percent occupancy since the mid-'80s."

Over the years, even though interest rates have come back down and commercial development has taken off again, Zimmerman has never experienced a drop in demand for turnkey office space.

"This is not just start-up companies and sole proprietorships," he says. "We have major corporations using these spaces for their sales-force personnel. That includes Beringer Wine, General Mills, General Foods and Hartford Insurance. If you bring a pencil you can go to work tomorrow because I'll give you a filing cabinet, a phone, a desk, a chair and Internet access."

