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BIZSMARTS

IN DETAIL

BROWN LOGISTICS SOLUTIONS

Business: Third-party logistics services

President: Rob Hunt

Based: Columbus

Founded: 1914

Employees: 25

2016 revenue: Would not disclose

**Brown Logistics
President Rob Hunt:
"We know how to declutter."**



JANET ADAMS

HOW I'M ...

Zeroing in on senior moving trend

BROWN LOGISTICS DISTINGUISHING ITSELF FROM COMPETITION BY CHASING NICHE

BY TOM KNOX

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A Columbus logistics company more than a century old has launched a side business focusing on the elderly.

Brown Logistics Solutions formed a division called Lifestyle Transition Solutions that targets moving and related services for people as they age.

There's a big market to be had - about 75.4 million people born between 1945 and 1964, the Baby Boomers, are living longer than ever.

That's where the company saw an opening. Management was looking for a way to differentiate itself from the competition, and new vice president Deanna DeSmet came in to the family-owned

business with the idea. She ran a market study that revealed Brown Logistics was already doing most of the work involved in moving seniors.

"They're moving into senior-living facilities, experiencing a lot of massive changes - it's a very difficult moment in life," DeSmet said. "We took a look at the different services we have with moving and shipping and storage and so on and decided to customize our services to reach that market."

There's more involved in these types of moves than a family moving from one neighborhood to another. First, there's the sheer amount of stuff collected over decades of living. What once was an existence at a five-bedroom home could morph into a condo, apartment, senior living facility or house half the size.

"We know how to declutter," said President Rob Hunt, citing an "Archie Bunker chair" that someone's father may have sat in for years that fit into a bigger space but may not work once the person moves. Lifestyle Transitions helps with auctions, charity donations and online sales.

There are some unnecessary items a moving senior citizen may not even know they don't need - some senior living centers don't have stoves, for example, so cookware isn't needed. Condos don't need lawn equipment or shovels, either.

Navigating family dynamics and stress is another service the company offers but isn't something to be found on its brochure - but it has to be done. Hunt said that in these kinds of moves, employees

almost act as therapists.

"We've seen just about everything there is in the moving business, and there's been studies that say moving is the most stressful thing next to death," he said. "It's a lot of hand-holding and people that need somebody to talk to."

There are competitors in this space, though Hunt said his company is different because it doesn't contract any work out. Marketing in this niche involved working with real estate agents, estate planners, probate attorneys and groups geared toward senior citizens.

The division has made about two dozen moves since operations began in September. Hunt expects it to be a major growth engine for Brown in the next five years, growing to as much as 60 percent of the business.