

Equipment leasing franchise comes to Upstate area

By Jenny Munro

BUSINESS WRITER
jmunro@greenviltenews.com

Bill High, who recently opened

a Wirth Business Credit franchise, is a new presence in the equipment leasing industry in the Upstate.

In fact, he said franchising equipment leasing in local areas rather than relying solely on national representatives is a rela-

tively new concept in the business. But demand is high for his services, he said. Volvo Rents, based in North Carolina, is the only other company franchising equipment leasing, he said.

The Upstate is a natural market, he said.

"I saw that franchising was a model I wanted to be involved in," he said. "The Upstate is growing. It's one of the fastest-growing

areas in the country."

With about 80 percent of businesses leasing some or all of their business equipment, he said, demand is strong for equipment leasing.

The "Equipment Leasing and Finance Association projects the industry will total about \$235 billion in 2007," said Bill Choi, a research spokesman for the association. According to the Small

Business Administration, 30 percent of capital expenditures annually are leased rather than purchased.

That leased equipment includes everything from telephone systems to computers to copiers on up to restaurant equipment and heavy equipment, High said.

"Computer leasing is a growing field" because computers become obsolete so quickly, Choi said.

In addition to stripping the cost of equipment from various vendors into one lease, Minneapolis-based Wirth also will include the cost of software, installation and taxes in the monthly leasing fee, said High, who headed up companies in the flexible packaging industry for 15 years and knows the problems facing small business owners.

Although he concentrates on small business leasing, High said, he also can work with large companies and start-up companies.

By having a known monthly leasing cost, companies are able to use bank lines of credits and other funds for their operating costs, he said.

The basic upfront cost for leasing through Wirth Business Credit is payment of two to three months' costs, he said. A lease generally runs from 24 months to 60 months and ranges from \$5,000 to \$300,000.

Wirth is only 2 years old, but Winmark Corp., its parent company, has more than 800 franchises, including Play It Again Sports and Plato's Closets. Wirth began franchising equipment leasing about a year ago, High said, but John Morgan, the chairman of Winmark, has been involved in equipment leasing since the 1960s.

High said he is the fifth franchisee in the country and the only one in South Carolina.