

# DALLAS/FORT WORTH BUSINESS JOURNAL

A SCRIPPS HOWARD BUSINESS JOURNAL

WEEK OF JULY 21, 1986

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FOCUS  
ISSUE



communications  
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## Deaf chemist lets colleagues 'hear with their eyes'

By Mark Henricks

For entrepreneur Sid Ander, the silence of hearing impairment spoke persuasively of business opportunity.

Ander was a chemist for a sheepskin tanning firm when he moved to Fort Worth from New York five years ago. One of the first things he noticed about the Metroplex was that deaf people like himself lacked one big advantage enjoyed by their Northeast counterparts.

In New York, many hearing impaired people were equipped with teletype machines, which allowed them to communicate through telephone lines without speaking, using a typewriter-like keyboard to enter messages and a display screen or printer to read them.

"I decided to go into the teletype distribution business in order to help other hearing-impaired people," Ander said.

He made that decision two years ago. Now, more than 1,000 unit sales later, Ander, 46, is preparing to make a career change, and become a full-time marketer of teletypes and other special devices for the hearing impaired.

He's already become one of the largest such distributors in the country, operating with his wife, Barbara, out of their spacious home on Fort Worth's southwest side.

Ander expects the teletype market to expand even more rapidly for two reasons. One, this means of communication is being pushed by anti-discrimination legislation and, two, businesses are going to recognize that the 2 million deaf people in this country represent a powerful, largely unexploited buying force.

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Sid and Barbara Ander market teletypes for the hearing impaired out of their home.

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Teletypes have been used a long time for business applications, notably to link news organizations such as wire services and newspapers. When they first became available to the deaf in the 1960s, teletypes turned the previously impenetrable world of telecommunications into a link with the outside for many deaf people.

"We can't talk on the phone, so we use teletypes," Ander said.

But the noisy, bulky machines available then cost several hundred dollars and weighed hundreds of pounds, limiting their marketability.

Advances in microelectronics have shrunk the machines to the size of a large desk-top calculator. They are quieter, portable and can run on batteries.

As teletypes have become more convenient, their prices have declined and the list of features has lengthened. For \$150 to \$700, users can buy machines that hold pages of text in solid-state memories, operate as automatic answering machines and double as versatile computer terminals.

The result has been that more deaf people are starting to use them, as are more businesses and people who need to communicate with the hearing impaired.

Along with the technical advances, another force has been a greater awareness

of the problems of the deaf. That has prompted the government to make teletype machines available to the hearing impaired at little or no cost.

The legislative movement was pushed by Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, a federal statute which prohibits discrimination against the handicapped. Now a similar raising of the marketing consciousness of teletype sellers is assisting in increasing the machines' spread.

"Teletypes are not just for the totally deaf," Ander said. "They are also for people who have lost part of their hearing or their voice."

Many of Ander's customers are not hearing impaired at all. They are companies or individuals who want to communicate or do business with hearing-impaired people.

"For every deaf person that buys one, five others will buy one to communicate with that person," Ander said.

One of the most promising markets consists of sales to state governments. Seven states have passed legislation which will require telephone companies to make teletypes available to their deaf customers.

California bought 15,000 machines for distribution to that state's deaf population. Arizona needed 1,800 and Illinois bought 8,000.

Texas legislators will consider a similar bill next year, Ander said. He expects the state to buy 5,000 to 10,000 machines.

Ander will be bidding on that contract, which likely will produce substantial ongoing sales in addition to the large initial order.

Ander isn't betting his entire business future on teletypes. In addition to them, he also sells devices which help the hearing impaired observe and handle such things as ringing telephones, crying babies and smoke alarms.

Usually, these machines flash lights to alert the deaf person. Ander's mainstay probably will continue to be selling the teletype machines to firms that do business with the hearing impaired.

They include hotels, airlines and other consumer-oriented businesses as well as public utilities, newspapers and state agencies.

"I think there are 5,000 people in business right now that have them," Ander said. "I see, in the next two years, it will be 10 times more." □