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PERSONALITY PROFILE



Kevin Slot was born in the Decatur area and has spent most of his life in central Illinois. He is married to Evelyn, and the couple has two children, Nate and Anthony. Slot holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and youth ministry from Trinity College and enjoys rollerblading, guitar playing and his children's activities. He is on the board of directors for the Rotary Club, serves on the Ministerial Alliance in Springfield, and is a member of West Side Christian Church. Slot spent five years in Minneola, Kan., where in 1992 he started a secretarial service known as Perfect Pages. "We were ahead of our time," said Slot regarding the business he and his wife attempted. "The area was not ready for it." Slot later discovered the concept of "print brokering" in which someone takes orders for commercial printers and then passes the order to the printer. Slot discovered this method to be very cost-effective. "More than half of the printing sold in the United States is through a distributorship."

Nature of the business: Tailored Printing began in 1994 as a partnership between Slot and his wife. It started as a commercial printer and has expanded its product line over the years. "Our niche is one printer, one online solution," said Slot. "If it involves ink, we print it." The majority of the work is on paper, but there are also promotional items such as mugs and t-shirts. The items are cataloged online for the customer to see, revise, proof and order. Recently, Tailored Printing introduced e-Print Management, an online ordering and management system that puts customers in control of their printing needs.

How is business?: "Things have been very good for us," said Slot. The business has grown an average of 10 percent per year for the past four years. The product line has expanded to include design services, business forms, checks and labels, promotional items, embroidered apparel, yard signs and banners. The company won the Small Business Award from the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce in 2000.

Trends: The number of printers in Springfield has dropped significantly over the years. Slot believes this is due to the growth of color copiers and office printers. "Many people are doing it themselves," he said. Also, people have become more open to ordering online. "The phones are quieter, and the use of e-mails has grown significantly." More than half of the orders are now through the e-Print Management system.

Challenges?: Getting that first order and having customers try the online ordering system was a challenge. "Once they try it, though, they ask what else it can do," said Slot. Slot and his wife had to invest heavily in the software initially, but were unsure if it would be used.

Of what accomplishments are you most proud?: A total of 75 United Way agencies use Tailored Printing's online ordering system coast-to-coast. "I feel good that they are saving thousands of dollars," said Slot. "It is a win-win for everyone." Also, Slot has found it great to be able to balance business and family, and being able to integrate the two in such a way that the customers are happy.

What's the best thing about being a business owner?: Slot enjoys having the freedom to experiment with the business until hitting on something like what he and his wife have. He also likes the freedom of having an office in his own home. "Business is getting easier all the time as we settle into our niche," said Slot.

What's next for you?: Slot and his wife are in the process of adopting two children, a brother and sister, from Haiti. Slot estimates that it will take roughly a year for the adoption to be complete.

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Quote: "Our niche is one printer, one online solution."