

# Talent scout

## DuffyGroup expands as it diversifies to satisfy customer needs

BY LYNN DUCEY

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**Y**ou may not know Kathleen Duffy, but she may know you. As a recruiter, she's made it her business to find all types of talent for all kinds of clients.

Her firm, DuffyGroup Inc., now has an office at Tatum Boulevard and Union Hills Drive and includes a staff of recruiters who offer a host of human resource services. It's a far cry from 1991 when Duffy started her company — then named DuffyResearch — in a spare bedroom.

"It was in the third bedroom in the home I share with my artist husband," Duffy said, referring to her spouse, Frank Ybarra.

She retains her maiden name professionally.

At the time, Duffy had hoped to contract with the executive search firm that had employed her for the past eight years as it relocated to California.

"We were going to establish a contractual relationship, but they didn't have enough work to keep me busy," she said.

Duffy used her connections to develop a business that has grown to include 36 employees today. While there now are three firms that comprise DuffyGroup, Duffy and her team spent last year developing a fourth service, DuffyGroup Connect, which now is being rolled out.

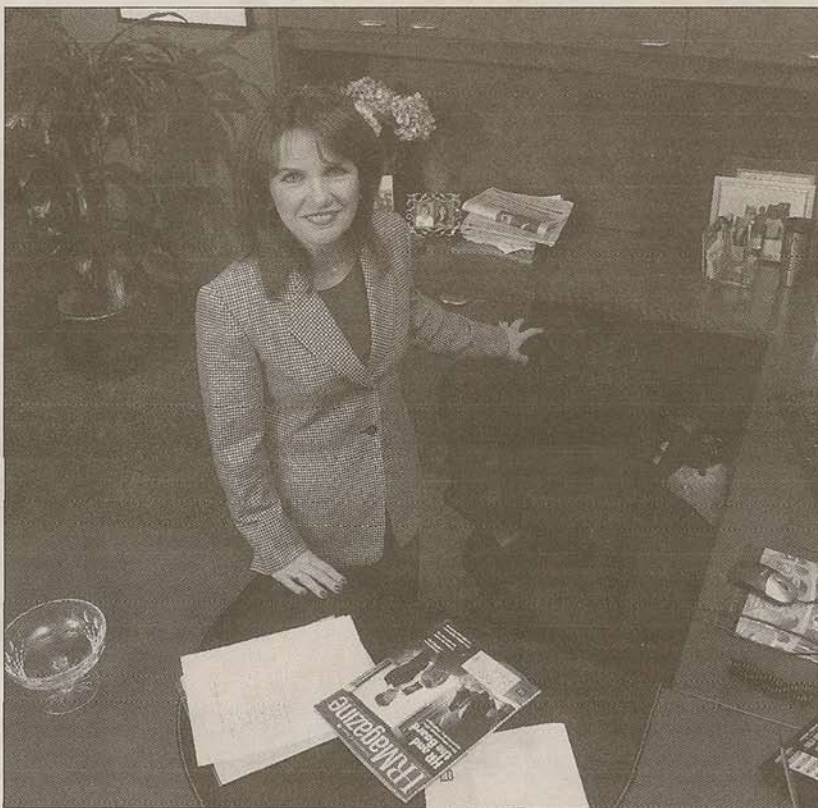
"This manages the back-end of the employee referral program for our customer," she said.

Existing services include TowerHunter, an executive search firm; DuffyResearch, a placement service for professionals and workers; and TeamBuilders, a company that places contract and regular full-time human resource professionals.

The DuffyGroup firms do not work with individuals, but rather with companies to identify their needs and find potential employees to fill those openings.

DuffyResearch bills clients on an hourly basis.

"We directly source candidates for our customers and will actively call individuals to introduce them to new opportunities and then screen them," Duffy said.



JIM POULIN/THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

**Kathleen Duffy, founder and chief executive of DuffyGroup Inc., helps corporate clients identify and fill executive and professional staffing positions. She started her company in a spare bedroom in 1991 when her employer moved operations to California.**

Duffy is proud of her business model that stresses the person, skills and "fit" as opposed to a contingency HR model, she said.

"In contingencies, companies will send résumés. If one hires that résumé, then a company will get a fee. In our model, it's based on what the client needs to recruit," Duffy said.

With more than two dozen DuffyGroup hires under her belt, Joan Dawson said she's sticking with what the company has to offer.

Dawson is the corporate human resources director at Scottsdale-based Mobility Electronics and has been using Duffy's firms for years.

Dawson estimates that she has hired more than 50 people through DuffyGroup as a human resource professional.

"And for Mobility, we are hitting a good 25 here," she said.

Dawson said she continues to use DuffyGroup because of the results and the candidates it produces.

"They are good people — well-qualified folks who stay around for a long time. I think it's really because DuffyGroup understands what we do and understands what we need as far as professionals," Dawson said.

Dawson said her staff and that of the DuffyGroup keep lines of communication open.

"They have relationships with most of my hiring managers here. They understand how our side of the business works and my managers love working with them. I don't get in the way of that," Dawson said.

Lastly, Dawson said Duffy also was instrumental to her as a mentor.

Duffy "is well-known in the business community here in the Valley and she is very well-respected. I consider her a mentor. She's introduced me to a lot of people in my field and a lot of people in the business community. I look up to her," Dawson said.

Duffy said she started her company out of necessity and didn't think much through before taking the leap.

"It was very reactionary in the beginning. I needed a job and needed one fast," she said.

Now, Duffy and her team have crafted a company mission and vision statement and regularly have staff meetings and team-building exercises.

"We're at a point where we're so large, you have to make certain that everybody is on the same page," Duffy said.

### AT A GLANCE

**DuffyGroup Inc.**

**Founded:** 1991

**Employees:** 36

**Who:** Kathleen Duffy, founder and chief executive

**Service:** Fills human resource needs of companies large and small through four boutique firms

**Clients:** A variety, including Mobility Electronics, Best Western International and TriWest Healthcare Alliance

**Web:** [www.duffygroupinc.com](http://www.duffygroupinc.com)