

Former Securus Group exec starts her own consulting firm

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A Lancaster County business-woman has moved into a building once owned by an architect.

It is where Laura L. Schanz plans to design her new future.

On Monday, Schanz, 45, opens Laura Schanz Consulting Associates at 1576 Lititz Pike.

Schanz and her husband, Terry, bought the building in August from Scott Widdall, who moved his operation to Mountville. The Schanzes formed a limited partnership called Lee Todd Enterprises and paid \$500,000 for the property, according to the Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds office.

The investment is a major step of faith for Laura Schanz, an experienced consultant and business manager who says it is time for her to practice what she has long preached to others.

As her voice echoed off the bare walls of her new office, and she stepped around card tables serving as temporary desks, Schanz talked about her decision to leave her position as president and chief operating officer of Securus Group Inc., an insurance and financial services company.

Her two years at Securus "taught me what it is personally that gives me energy," she said. "I love to help people and businesses grow."

Schanz joined Securus in December 2002 after leaving a five-year partnership with Roger North at North & Schanz Consulting Group Inc.

A few months before, Schanz won the Athena Award, bestowed once a year upon a successful businesswoman by the



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Laura L. Schanz is president of the fledgling Laura Schanz Consulting Associates, 1576 Lititz Pike.

Lancaster County Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

The award gave her the encouragement to move on and try something new, she said.

During her tenure at Securus, the company doubled in size and relocated to larger headquarters. President Ray Shirk took care of bringing in new business while Schanz oversaw the internal operations, including employee growth and development.

At Securus, "I felt challenged and stretched," said Schanz. She left the company in March. The company had 40 employees and did \$3.9 million in business.

Over lemonade and coffee across the street at the Lancaster Coffee Co., Schanz said she learned that some people respond positively to a positive environment and others respond negatively.

Either way, a leader must remain consistent in her mission. At Securus, Schanz defined her mission with three words: caring, clarity and communication.

"What's hard in business is being consistent, no matter what," said Schanz. "If you can live out that message, your mission becomes more clear. People grow more energetic, and they have better focus."

It's easy to leave employees "out of the loop," said Schanz, especially those you don't like or who don't agree with you. "It takes more energy and more effort to include everyone in your communications."

One of the greatest failings of businesses large and small is not putting people first, she said. "We allow our urgencies in business to undermine our relationships with people," she said.

Starting Monday, Schanz will have a lot of time to cultivate relationships. "I want to pass on what I've learned."

Laura Schanz Consulting Associates has one employee, Sara Lichtenwaller, administrative assistant.

Schanz has plans to make the place a home away from home for clients. With wireless Internet capabilities and coffee and bagels, Schanz hopes to begin to draw customers who need help in managing business processes and people.

She loves consulting because of the variety it offers. "I have opportunities to work with different teams in different communities."

She has several customers already, including Sir Speedy Printing, Lancaster.