

Oxford aims for new degree

Real estate firm bolsters commercial leasing with young associates

BY PAULA GARDNER
pgardner@bdwbiz.com

The Oxford Cos. is expanding its portfolio to over 700,000 square feet and increasing its commercial leasing staff to bolster its presence in Ann Arbor.

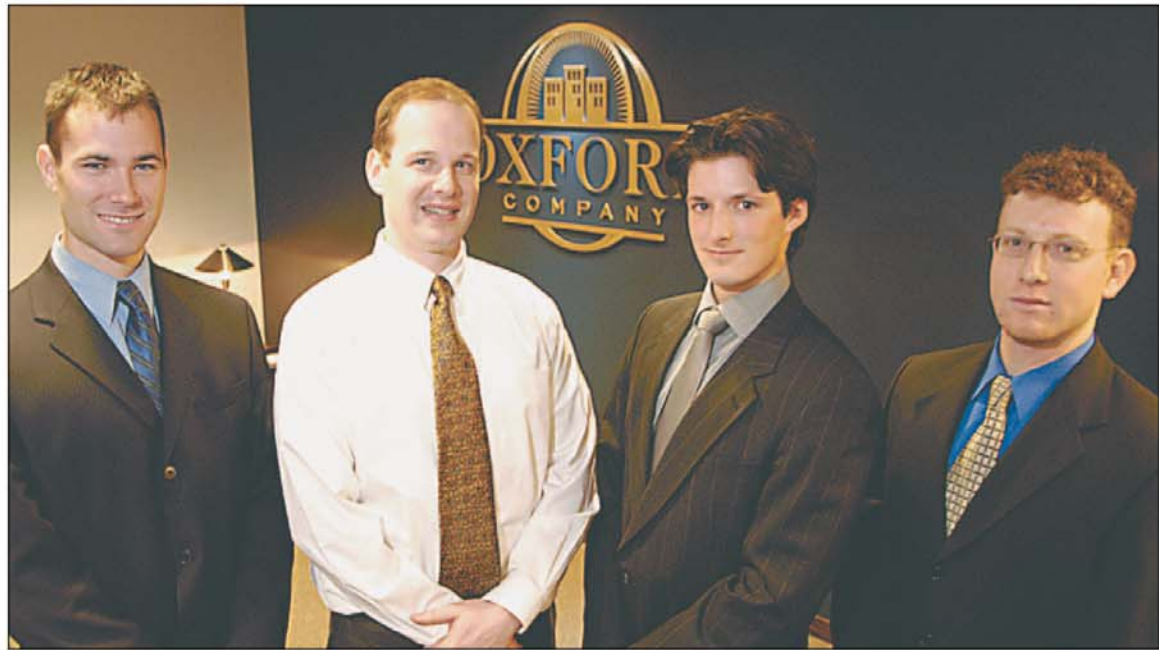
Jeff Hauptman, company president, said adding two sales associates and an intern among other recent changes should power the company toward increased market share.

Oxford owns about two-thirds of its managed property, which includes the Burlington office complex near Briarwood Mall. It moved into industrial/warehouse space recently by taking on management of more than 110,000 square feet on Ellsworth Road near State Street.

The Ann Arbor company has generated more than \$30 million in business this year.

Now Oxford Commercial is aggressively pursuing new business, which Hauptman said will benefit from setting up a boutique firm with a young, ambitious staff.

"Our goal is to dive right in with third-party property management or purchasing (new buildings)," Hauptman said.



ROBERT RAMEY

Oxford's tech-savvy team: Jason Costello (from left), Jeff Hauptman, Newcombe Clark and Scott Menkus.

The company will not create competition between buildings, he said; instead, Hauptman is looking to diversify the geography of Oxford properties.

Hauptman said he has poured an undisclosed amount of money into the business over the past year, expanding his offices, improving properties and upgrading technology.

That technology gain fits with his computer-savvy staff: Newcombe Clark and Jason Costello are 23 years old, while researcher Scott Menkus is 21, and all have university degrees and the drive to apply technology to

transactions.

Each member of the trio is to learn from Hauptman, who moved into real estate while he was a University of Michigan student and bought several properties while still in his 20s.

"We're motivated, aggressive and in a situation where we can't fail," Clark said, praising his mentor and the company's portfolio.

Their age brings strengths, Clark said, including the drive to spend 70-plus hours a week at work. But there are drawbacks. "Every day you walk into a situation where everyone thinks they're smarter than you," he

said.

But the trio continues to gel as a team, learning together that they need to dress snazzier than more established brokers. They've also learned that they must fight the tendency to prove they're capable when their experience level is challenged.

Still, they say their weapon is what they know. They're using office computers to run advanced reports and compile refined data.

"It's all about information management," Costello said.

Paula Gardner covers real estate and development for Business Direct Weekly. ■