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Fixed-fee model bolsters TaxOps

■ Lakewood firm features veterans from the Big Four accounting companies

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The partners at TaxOps, a Lakewood-based boutique tax firm, have experience from all of the Big Four accounting firms. But the company's founder says their philosophy differs greatly from a big firm.

CEO Brian Amann started TaxOps 10-plus years ago, leaving his job in the Denver office of Ernst & Young as tax outsourcing operations director for the Pacific Southwest.

"I would hear from Ernst & Young clients that they wished there was a local firm with the expertise of a Big Four firm, but with a focus on middle-market companies," Amann said. "There was a level of service and attention they deserved and weren't getting from the large firms."

TaxOps' services range from the full outsourcing of a company's tax functions to tax-risk management, cash-flow management and compliance issues.

Another difference between TaxOps and the big firms is that TaxOps uses a fixed-fee billing model instead of billable hours.

"We don't do time sheets. We don't have office hours or formal dress codes. It's a casual environment," Amann said.

The firm's fixed-fee model

came about when a large client demanded a fixed fee, which the partners hadn't done before.

"We did it, and it really changed our thinking," Amann said. "We had to get better at project management, and we dug in a lot about how to use technology to be more efficient and effective."

TaxOps' clients like the fixed-fee model because it's predictable "and we like it for the same reason," he said.

During the firm's first few years, Amann and his partners didn't really have a growth strategy, he said. In 2008, they started to think more strategically and developed a more formal business plan, as well as a better marketing plan.

"We doubled in size in 2010 and have been growing [revenue] about 60 percent a year since then," Amann said.

In 2012, TaxOps was named to the Inc. 5000 fastest-growing companies in the nation, with 203 percent growth in revenue in the previous three years. A few months later, Accounting Today named it the best small firm to work for because of its entrepreneurial philosophy and commitment to its staff.

"That day was a great day for us, being named a best place to work, because it came during a



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CEO Brian Amann of TaxOps with some of his 26 employees at the office in Douglas County.

period of high growth for us, and those two things don't normally go hand in hand," Amann said.

The firm now has 26 employees and an office in Douglas County south of E-470, and recently opened an office in Stamford, Conn.

And though Amann would consider opening offices in other cities, such as Austin, Texas, and

Portland, Ore., the growth has to make sense for the firm.

"One of the things I'm most proud of, in the last 12 months, were the things we didn't do because the client situations weren't right," Amann said. "We've walked away from some significant opportunities, because they didn't fit with our firm."