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Linda Heuer buys Eide Bailly's benefits unit; rebrands it 121 Benefits

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Linda Heuer led accounting firm Eide Bailly's benefits-administration business for more than 20 years. Now, she officially owns that business and is expanding its staff and client roster under the brand 121 Benefits.

Heuer bought Minneapolis-based Eide Bailly's third-party benefits administration unit earlier this year for an undisclosed amount. Eide Bailly dabbled in benefits administration for years, but most of the firm's attention was on its core accounting operations, Heuer said. When Eide Bailly decided to sell its TPA last year, Heuer decided to buy it because she saw opportunity for the business to grow as a standalone venture.

All Eide's TPA clients joined 121 (pronounced "one-to-one") following the acquisition. Today, Minneapolis-based 121 administers benefits such as health savings accounts and employee-wellness programs on behalf of employers, most of them large and mid-sized businesses. Such services are increasingly in demand, as employers move workers into high-deductible health plans, which are often paired with health savings and



121 BENEFITS

Linda Heuer ran Eide Bailly's benefits business for years.

other accounts, Heuer said.

The company's clients include retailer Christopher & Banks Corp. and the city of Minneapolis. The firm mostly targets businesses seeking custom benefits packages.

The company has about 24 employees and added a handful of workers in recent months. Heuer expects the firm's staff to grow by between 15 and 20 percent annually. She declined to disclose revenue. The company's focus is on the Midwest for now, though Heuer would eventually like to have an office or staff based in other states.

Heuer launched 121 Benefits at a time of consolidation in the TPA market. She said that trend was one reason she was confident it was good time to strike out on her own.

"A lot of the locally owned and run TPAs were acquired, so it created more opportunity for the independent business owner to be able to provide more of a high-touch service model," she said.

Heuer said 121 also has benefited from becoming a woman-owned company, a change that's appealed to public- and private-sector employers.