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# Universal's declining sales force layoffs

New Mexico Business Weekly - by [Kathi Schroeder](#) NMBW Staff

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**Americana Publishing** (OTC:BB APBH) of Albuquerque has been in talks for the past year with **Universal Printing & Publishing Inc.**'s President Tony Medrano, to buy some of the company's assets, including its web press, reportedly the largest in the city.

At one point, there were reports that Americana planned to acquire Universal, located at 1224 Bellamah NW, through an exchange of stock shares. Americana Chairman George Lovato Jr. says his company is still interested in purchasing some of Universal's assets in spite of recent news that it laid off most of its

workforce.

On May 16, only days after a federal tax lien for \$251,260 was filed against the firm's property by the Internal Revenue Service for payroll taxes that the IRS says Universal had not paid since March 2001, Universal laid off most of its employees, about 20 to 25 workers, say sources close to the company.

Universal is completing printing jobs with a skeleton crew, mostly comprised of family members, according to a business consultant working for Albuquerque's BH Capital Ltd., one of Lovato's other businesses.

That source says Universal's owners decided to "wind down the business because of declining sales, although, at this time, the phones are still working and the doors are open while the business is in transition." The printing company's sales reportedly had declined to the point that it was unable to service its debt.

The Bernalillo County Treasurer's office says the company's 2002 property tax bill of \$10,662 had not been paid as of May 20 of this year. Two other business entities using the same 1224 Bellamah NW address, 4M's Enterprises Inc. and Albuquerque Real Estate LLC had paid 2002 taxes to the county for \$29,038 and \$7951, respectively.

In a March 2002 article, the Albuquerque Tribune reported that the printing company's annual sales were nearly \$6 million. But sources say this year's sales were not expected to reach \$1 million. As a whole, the nation's publishing industry has been hit hard by the country's economic doldrums, especially since Sept. 11, 2001. The industry has experienced an average decline in revenues of 20 to 25 percent since the terrorist attacks.

Advances in printing technology, consolidations in the paper industry and ownership issues have led to the recent closures of some printing firms in the city, including Arnold Litho and Cooper Press. Universal's Web site listed Intel Corp., Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau, Bank of America and Mulhern & Company Advertising Inc. and others as clients, but Ann Mulhern, president of the ad agency, says she stopped doing business with the firm several years ago. She and other former clients say Universal "promised stuff they couldn't deliver, from timely deliveries to the quality of the product."

In February, Universal filed a lawsuit against former Bernalillo County District Attorney Bob Schwartz for \$20,891 plus interest, claiming he didn't pay for some of his 2001 mayoral campaign fliers. Schwartz counter sued, alleging the printing company didn't get some of his election fliers out in time and that it might have cost him the election. The case is in arbitration.

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