

## OfficeMax founder is starting Max-Wellness

By Kathie Kroll

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<http://officemax.com>



Thomas Ondrey/The Plain Dealer

Retail entrepreneur Michael Feuer moved into his new corporate headquarters 21 years to the day after he started OfficeMax Inc.

WARRENSVILLE HEIGHTS -- Michael Feuer is a very superstitious entrepreneur.

Twenty-one years to the day after he started OfficeMax Inc., Feuer and a new business partner, Jared Florian, moved into the corporate headquarters from which they are launching a new retail concept called **Max-Wellness**.

Max-Wellness will be an upscale one-stop shop for health items, from yoga mats and medicine balls to walkers and supplements.

His spacious and well-appointed new offices in Warrensville Heights are a far cry from the unheated Solon warehouse from which Feuer and then-partner Robert Hurwitz started OfficeMax.

In 1988, they launched the nation's third-largest office supply chain from a filthy building where they couldn't use the copier and the coffeepot together without blowing a fuse. When the toilet broke, Feuer rolled up his sleeves and fixed it himself rather than pay a plumber \$50.

He has used the name "Max" in every business as shorthand for "maximum service, maximum selection and maximum value," from OfficeMax to CopyMax printing and copy centers to Max-Ventures, his private-equity firm, to PsyMax Solutions, a human resources firm.

Using what he learned from OfficeMax and as an executive with Fabri-Centers of America Inc., now **Jo-Ann Stores Inc.**, Feuer has been roaming around drugstores, vitamin shops and other stores watching people shop and noting what they buy.

He would love to create his own version of the sound-proof "Cone of Silence" from the TV comedy "Get Smart," enabling customers to have private conversations about their ailments.

He is also ordering inventory, tasting and testing things himself. "If you walked into my bedroom right now, you'd see all kinds of pillows and neck braces, and you'd probably wonder what was wrong with me," he said.

Feuer has offered employees, vendors and landlords smaller salaries, payments and lease agreements in exchange for a stake in Max-Wellness, a deal most have been willing to make because the people who started OfficeMax became millionaires.

The first retail stores will open this September in Westlake and in an East Side suburb, as well as in Naples, Fla. They also plan to sell products via catalog and online, Florian said.

When Feuer opened the first OfficeMax store in Mayfield Heights, his first customers were two Ursuline College nuns who promised: "We'll pray for you."

As he recounted the story, Feuer added: "I'm going to invite two nuns to my grand opening."

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