

Henger Rast making fast strides in growth

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Henger Rast & Associates LLC is a little company making big strides. After five months in business, the Birmingham-based residential mortgage bank ended May with \$13 million in loans closed for the month. That's up from \$5.5 million in December, when the company was known as Rast Mortgage.

Henger Rast was born early this year when Rob Henger, previously a satellite branch manager for **SouthTrust Mortgage**, joined Rast, a small brokerage. Now, that small brokerage is a full-service mortgage bank with additional employees, new offices and one simple goal: to become the Birmingham area's No. 1 mortgage banking company by volume by the end of the year.

Henger, who recently was named one of the Top 200 mortgage originators in the country by Mortgage Originator Magazine, acknowledges he doesn't like being No. 2.

"No. 2 is just not winning, and life's a little bit of a game to me," he says.

Doubles payroll

Henger joined the company as managing partner and part owner Jan. 22. Renee Ambrose, president of Rast Mortgage, retains that role in the company's new incarnation. The company also has taken on a team of additional staff members, with total employment growing from about eight at the beginning of this year to 19 today.

Among them, Lee Townsend, another former SouthTrust employee, joined Henger Rast last month as business development manager. A few weeks ago, the company brought five new loan officers on board: Brian Brown, Rainer Ezell, Rob Irby, Daniel Pate and Whitt Wilson.

Townsend says the company took a different tack than most when looking for new loan officers, focusing on finding the right personalities for the job rather than a lot of experience or contacts. As Henger says, the "paramount part of somebody's employment, to me, is how they fit in the culture."

The company's new loan officers are currently in the midst of a six-week mortgage banking "boot camp" at the **Xinnix Institute** in Atlanta. Henger says the company is sharing the cost of the program with the new hires.

To accommodate its larger staff, Henger Rast this month moved into new offices, leasing 2,500 square feet at 3161 Cahaba Heights Road, above Satterfield's restaurant. **Prier Construction Inc.** in Birmingham was hired to handle work on the interior office space.

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