



Parts and service win Simi Valley company statewide award



PHOTO BY [KAREN QUINCY LOBERG](#)

Edgardo Lagos, left and Lad Neufeld manufacture aerospace parts at UDASH Inc. The Simi Valley company was started in the garage of its founder, George Melamed. It will receive the SpotBeam award for significant work with the aerospace industry.

By Allison Bruce

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The struggles of a small, family-owned company are magnified during a recession, but the characteristics that have grown UDASH Inc. for nearly 30 years and recently won it a prestigious award are helping the company survive the downturn.

The California Space Authority is recognizing the Simi Valley company's commitment to custom-manufactured components with its SpotBeam award at a Nov. 18 ceremony in Los Angeles.

Founder and CEO George Melamed said recognition helps bring attention to the company and sometimes business to boot.

The California Space Authority takes nominations year-round, with SpotBeam winners selected by an advisory board, spokesman Eric Daniels said.

UDASH was recognized for its contribution to space and aerospace through the manufacture of such flight hardware as brackets, housings and components for Boeing Space, ATK Space Systems, Lockheed Martin Space Systems and other companies, as well as critical components for the International Space Station.

The company was one of 50 across the nation recognized by NASA for components manufactured for the Mars Exploration rovers.

While UDASH may not be a household name for the general public, it is integral to the success of such programs, Daniels said.

Company moved to Simi in July

UDASH is among some select company. Other SpotBeam award winners this year include Google Earth; Buzz Aldrin, former astronaut and founder of Starcraft Boosters Inc., a rocket design company, and the ShareSpace Foundation, a nonprofit devoted to advancing space education; Space Exploration Technologies; Ellen Ochoa, former astronaut and deputy director of the Johnson Space Center; and Aersopace Valley of France.

UDASH moved to Simi Valley in July from Chatsworth. The draw was the 25,000-square-foot building that the company could own, rather than rent. UDASH occupies about 4,000 square feet of office space and 8,000 square feet of warehouse space with room to grow.

The warehouse is stocked with machines costing up to \$1.5 million to produce parts. The machines must be precise and the hardware they produce is triple-checked.

UDASH benefits from having diversified so that it serves the aerospace, commercial, medical and automotive industries. UDASH is also an 8(a) small disadvantaged business, which Melamed said, helps get its foot in the door to bid on certain contracts. Whether it gets the contract, however, depends on having a competitive price.

That can be a challenge for a small business, which is why the company seeks cost savings through smart business decisions.

It also has to stand out on quality, with specifications and inspection vital for high-precision parts. "We try to give them the best quality in a timely manner at a reasonable price," Melamed said.

Many incentives offered

Though he emphasizes the company's attention to cost-cutting and avoiding waste, another factor behind its performance is the family atmosphere encouraged among its 15 employees.

Melamed started his own business out of his garage in 1981 after years of working for companies where he never received even a pat on the back for his hard work.

He vowed to do things differently for his own employees. UDASH offers incentives, such as \$150 gold coins for exceeding sales goals or night school assistance to build up technical and language skills.

He tries to give people the freedom to make their own decisions and reach their goals. "I try to treat people the same way I wanted to be treated when I worked for others," Melamed said.

He also tries to treat suppliers well. He would rather pay quickly and receive a discount for his company than make suppliers wait.

The success of the approach is visible now as the company expands and hires, while other businesses shut their doors.

In the beginning, UDASH was making about \$40,000 a year and Melamed took little salary home, reinvesting in the company instead. It reached a maximum annual revenue of \$3.5 million, though revenue has declined since then following variations in the economy, industry demand and other factors, he said.

Terry Sana, chief operating officer, said the company's forecast reflects historical performance, the market climate and how well the company is doing meeting this year's targets.

In the first six months of this year, the company did not hit its targets, but, Sana said, UDASH is expected to meet its forecast in the second half, having seen a slight improvement because of internal efforts and economic improvement. "We have seen quite an increase in activity," Sana said.

This year, revenue is expected to be slightly less than in 2008, but it should be slightly higher than 2008 in 2010. The company expects 25 percent growth in both 2011 and 2012.

For Melamed, success is a matter of faith in God as well as planning. "You don't know one day to the next what's going to happen," he said.

On the Net: <http://www.udash.com> <http://www.californiaspaceauthority.org>