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Local companies set to work with giants

Verdugo Jobs Center helps two firms get a chance at partnerships with Boeing, Lockheed.

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Two local businesses with deep ties to the military and aviation sectors recently got huge lifts from a federally funded training program.

Glendale's Accurate Dial & Nameplate and Burbank's Centerpoint Manufacturing are poised to pick up work from some of the largest companies in the nation thanks to months-long improvement efforts, a financial stake from the Verdugo Jobs Center and the expertise of the nonprofit California Manufacturing Technology Consulting.

Using federal stimulus funds, the job center tapped the nonprofit to train staff and provide marketing advice, helping Centerpoint and Accurate Dial to get the certification needed to serve as contractors for Boeing, Lockheed Martin and other firms that hold lucrative military contracts.

Don Nakamoto, a labor force analyst for the Verdugo Jobs Center, said his agency spent about \$165,000 to help 18 manufacturing companies — ranging from machine shops to bakeries — through the program, saving 170 jobs while adding about 24 new workers to local payrolls.

“In this environment, it has been difficult to save jobs or create new jobs, but by identifying turnaround projects, we've been able to do pretty good work for the community,” Nakamoto said.

Located near the Glendale railroad station, Accurate Dial is a 21-employee firm launched 53 years ago. The firm uses engraving and other techniques to make everything from the cockpit displays on bombers to the ID plates on fire extinguishers.

The firm has won Small Business Administration awards for its work on the B-2 Stealth Bomber and other products, but Quality Manager Erin Dyer said that as the manufacturing sector cooled off during the recession, her shop slowed down.

She said firms including Northrop-Grumman Corp. asked Accurate Dial to comply with an aerospace industry standard called AS 9100 to stay on the list of potential contractors.

AS 9100 sets the bar for how companies manufacture products, design their operations and test and inspect their work. But it can be a challenge for small firms to meet the standards.

Getting certified, Dyer said, “was over our head.”

When she learned that the Verdugo Jobs Center could help fund the effort and California Manufacturing Technology Consulting could draft a road map for improvement, she said, “I jumped on it.”

Months later, the company plans to celebrate its certification May 19 with a visit from Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Burbank).



CNC operator Jefferson Duran, who has worked at Accurate Dial and Nameplate, Inc. for three years, cuts a nameplate with a micro-milling machine in Glendale on Monday, April 25, 2011.
(Tim Berger/Staff Photographer)

More importantly, it is now in better standing with major clients.

“By bringing our operating manual in compliance with aerospace industry specifications, we were able to retain quoting opportunities with Lockheed Martin and return [to working] with Northrop Grumman,” Dyer said.

Brothers Andy, Johnny and Tony Rotunno, who own Centerpoint Manufacturing in Burbank, were in a similar spot. Their 45-employee firm makes airplane landing gear, as well as parts for oil and gas drilling operations. They had sought advice on reaching the AS 9100 standard, but couldn't afford the time or money.

The company was certified in December.

“All of our customers are demanding that standard,” Johnny Rotunno said.

His brother, Tony, said the firm has picked up one job to build the prototype of a new piece of equipment, and he believes more are on the way.

“It's just like a restaurant,” he said. “The better grade you get, the better clientele you are going to get.”