

Washroom Equipment Maker Gets Clean Slate

CONSTRUCTION: Bobrick starting work on new North Hollywood offices.

Bobrick Washroom Equipment Inc. broke ground June 10 on its new \$20 million corporate headquarters and manufacturing plant in North Hollywood.

Construction is expected to start by late summer or early fall on the 3.5-acre parcel on Tujunga Avenue three blocks from the current Bobrick facility in the 11611 Hart St. where

the company has operated for more than 50 years. The new building will take between 15 months and 18 months to complete.

The 100,000-square-foot headquarters will attract Bobrick to allow Bobrick to attract and retain a talented workforce, said President **Mark Louchheim**.

"We are loyal to Los

Angeles and to our local workforce, which we anticipate will grow over the coming years," he said in a prepared statement.

Bobrick designs and manufactures washroom and toilet compartment accessories and partitions for non-residential locations. Among the company's brands are Koala Kare Child Care diaper changers often found in public restrooms. Bobrick has manufacturing and distribution facilities in Centennial, Colo.; Durant, Okla.; Jackson, Tenn.; and Clifton Park, N.Y.

Bobrick has enlisted noted San Francisco



Rendering: Bobrick's \$20 million headquarters on Hart Street.

architecture firm **Gensler** for the design concepts and office interiors, and **RGA Office of Architectural Design** of Irvine for the building's exterior. Financing for the project was provided by **Wells Fargo Bank**.

Tech Talk

When **Richard Brent** was asked to attend a seminar on exporting, he thought of every excuse to get out of it.

But the organizers, the **California Manufacturing Technology Consultants**, were persistent and kept at Brent about how his business, **Louroe Electronics** in Van Nuys, would benefit.

Brent relented and attended the seminar series, **ExporTech**, in late 2012. Since then, he has seen the light of selling Louroe's audio monitoring equipment to other countries.

"The whole process culminated in a strategic plan to grow my business through exporting," said Brent, chief executive of Louroe.

Now he's taking steps to get other manufacturing executives to consider attending the

ExporTech program when it takes place in the San Fernando Valley this summer.

California Manufacturing Technology Consultants will host the program at the **Airtel Plaza Hotel** in Van Nuys on July 24, Aug. 21, and Sept. 18.

To drum up interest in the Valley sessions, Brent has sent letters under his signature to manufacturers.

ExporTech is not an industry sector specific program and is best suited for the upper management at companies with 20 to 200 employees, said **Elizabeth Glynn**, export advisor at **CMTC**.

"The sweet spot are those companies that have done some exporting but lack a formal plan," Glynn said.

CMTC is presenting ExporTech at a time when exporting is promoted as a way for U.S. companies to recover from the recession and remain globally competitive. President **Barack Obama** has pledged to double U.S. exports by 2014.

U.S. exports are growing, rising to \$2.2 trillion last year from \$1.8 trillion in 2010, according to the U.S. Commerce Department.

Foreign consumers like U.S. goods for their top quality and materials that are inspected and regulated, said **Griselda Padilla**, a human resources consultant working with Louroe.

"U.S. products have a good reputation overseas and customers would rather pay more for the American product," Padilla said.

The ExporTech program follows a set structure. The first session looks at successful exporting models and gets executives thinking of what they need to be aware of when designing their own strategies; session two is on the mechanics of exporting and getting around obstacles; and the third has the participants present their exporting plan to a group of trade professionals for feedback.

The program takes executive teams from a maximum of eight companies and it is important that a commitment to completing it and implementing an exporting plan come from the top, Glynn said.

"There is an investment of time, some financial resources and at some time they will have to dedicate staff," she added.

At Louroe, founded by Brent's uncle Louis Weiss in 1979, Brent has identified Mexico as where he wants to start exporting the company's audio equipment. Louroe is working with U.S. Commercial Service, a trade promotion division of the Commerce Department, on the effort and building up a sales base from scratch.

Attending the ExporTech sessions helped Brent to focus on where Louroe was in comparison to competing companies and to talk with other executives new at exporting.

"We are missing the link of who has the products and who wants to buy," Brent said. "ExporTech can put that together."

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