Business

Laser company keeps Salem roots

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SALEM – Despite its new name and ongoing global expansion, Salem's ProPhotonix Limited still has its roots firmly entrenched in the Granite State.

Though the company, formerly known as Stocker Yale Inc., sold its North American operations in October 2009, officials continue to lease office space inside the same Hampshire Road industrial building that once served as manufacturing space. The site's manufacturing facilities are currently being leased by Coherent.

Over the past two years, the company has continued focusing on business abroad with 100 or so manufacturing positions having been moved to facilities in Ireland and the United Kingdom, as the machine-vision product manufacturer continues to develop lasers and LED technology for the medical and homeland security sectors.



Mark Blodgett, chairman and CEO of ProPhotonix Limited of Salem

The company maintains a strong presence on American shores, according to Mark Blodgett, chief executive officer and chairman, who said that 35 percent of company sales are in the U.S. market.

In an effort to expand sales, ProPhotonix is currently in the process of hiring a North American sales director, and Blodgett said the opening of further sales positions are anticipated in Germany, England and the United States.

"As overall business continues to grow, we'll definitely continue adding more people," Blodgett said.

Seven employees are currently based in the Salem office, the site of the company's corporate marketing, Web management and finance operations.

Having served as a company executive officer since 1989, Blodgett has seen the company through many changes over the years.

"We've been here for a number of years, and we plan to stay where we are, at least from a corporate standpoint," Blodgett said this week. "And that's not to say we won't acquire another North American facility in the future."

With local clients including Londonderry's InSight technology and Raytheon, officials say business has never been better.

"Unlike other companies, we've had a very steady increase in sales," Blodgett said. "We're now in our eight quarter of consecutive growth."

In the past year alone, Blodgett said the company has seen a 45 percent overall growth rate.

That rate continues to rise. Through the first six months of 2011, ProPhotonix has grown more than 56 percent.

Blodgett attributed much of that growth to the rising demand for medical and homeland security-related products.

Traditionally, the company's sales of machine vision lasers and LED products accounted for 90 percent of all sales. These days, such industrial lasers and LED components account for 62 percent of sales.

Among the unique products made by ProPhotonix are LED components used to inspect solar panels and components used by a European milk carton manufacturer in the bottling process.

The company's LED components are also being used by another client to clean plates on portable X-ray machines.

New opportunities always present themselves. Blodgett said the company is currently in the process of developing a new product line of LED lighting systems for corporate and industrial facilities.

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