

RIVERBEND BUSINESSES

Brothers boost Brilex, Boltech

The two related companies have added 30 workers since last year.

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YOUNGSTOWN — A \$1.9 million investment is paying off for brothers who own two companies in the city's Riverbend section.

Extra space and equipment added to the manufacturing shop of Brilex and the engineering offices of Boltech have led to rapid growth in the past year, Brian and Alex Benyo said.

The brothers didn't want to release sales figures, but their increasing staff shows how much the Crescent Street companies have grown. Brilex has added about 25 workers since last year to increase its work force to 85. Boltech increased its engineering staff from seven to 11 this year.

Brilex manufactures a variety of machinery for industry. The brothers created the company in 1996 with a focus on making parts for steel mill equipment. Its \$1.5 million addition last year is helping Brilex expand its scope.

Previously, the company made parts for other companies that were producing industrial machines. Brilex made parts that weighed up to 1,000 pounds. Now, Brilex uses its new fabrication, machining and assembling capabilities to produce complex machines that weigh up to 100 tons.

For example, the 15,000-square-foot addition includes a crane that can lift 70 tons 35 feet. Other new equipment also allows Brilex to produce parts to more exacting specifications.

Staffs grow as well

The other important part of the expansion is the staff, said Brian Benyo, who is president of Brilex and vice president of Boltech. Over the past five years, Brilex has added several people with more than 20 years' experience at other companies that built industrial machines, he said.

In the shop recently, employees were piecing together a machine that would be used for pressure testing of oil and gas pipelines in the southern U.S. They also were producing metal components for a vehicle-shuttling system that will be used in an automated parking garage.

The company also produces equipment to process and handle steel, but the metals industry accounts for only about half of its business today, compared with 75 percent five years ago.

Growing industries for Brilex include power generation, power transmission and mining.

About one-quarter of Brilex sales come from products that are exported to other countries.

In fact, Brian Benyo said the industrial explosion in China has helped the local company because it has been supplying equipment for



The Vindicator/William D. Lewis

GROWING FAST: Alex Benyo, left, and his brother, Brian, stand in an addition built onto the manufacturing company Brilex. Increasing orders have led the company to hire about 25 workers since last year. An employee, below, works at refurbishing a mill chock at the Youngstown shop.

China's expanding industrial base.

Alex Benyo, who is vice president of Brilex and president of Boltech, said the industrial boom in China won't damage the U.S. unless the Chinese economy stops consuming its industrial products. If China needs to increase exports in order to maintain its growth, the U.S. economy will be threatened, he said.

Haven't hurt company

The brothers added that Chinese exports to this country haven't hurt Brilex because it is producing customized products, not commodities that compete strictly on price. Its customers want to work with someone they know because they are looking for highly specialized products, they said.

While Brilex's growth can be seen on the shop floor, the expansion of Boltech's is evidenced by a remodeled office building next door. The company completed a \$350,000 renovation of the building this spring. The building had been vacant for years but used to house offices for United Engineering.

The Boltech staff used to be crammed into one office within Brilex but now it is spread out over the top floor of the 10,000-square-

foot, two-story building.

Alex Benyo said he thinks the engineering and design company could grow to 30 or 40 employees as the brothers focus on increasing its business. Boltech was created two years after Brilex, but the brothers said they had been primarily focused on growing the manufacturing business until recently.

Boltech's recent hires have included engineering graduates from Youngstown State University and engineers who left Delphi Packard Electric.

Boltech designs equipment for a variety of industries and then uses Brilex for manufacturing. Boltech designs account for about 10 percent of Brilex's business.

The brothers said that the two companies are operated separately and have different sales forces because they don't want either company to be insulated from the competitive pressures of the market.

The brothers started their companies after growing up in the metal fabricating business. Their father, Eugene, was president of Northeast Fabricators in Youngstown for 25 years until he retired in 1997.

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