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NEWSMAKER

Chafee Center director sees R.I. exports expanding

By Natalie Myers

A lot has changed since Ray Fogarty became director of the R.I. Export Assistance Center, now the John H. Chafee Center at Bryant University. Fogarty said he can remember having to show companies why it was important to start thinking about tapping into foreign markets in the late 1980s, early 1990s. It's much different now because "they know they have to do it," he said. But the center does have to keep offering new, unique products and services that are useful to local companies looking to do business in a constantly evolving global market. In an interview with Providence Business News, Fogarty shared some of the programs that the Chafee Center is focusing on this year.

PBN: First off, Rhode Island's exports have increased 30 percent in the past 18 months. What are your thoughts on why exports have increased? Is it a significant increase?

FOGARTY: It is. ... There are fluctuations throughout the years, but one of the interesting parts is that even though manufacturing jobs have gone down, exports have gone up just about every year since we began our center in 1988. There have been years that we had a 30-percent increase. There have been years that we had ... small declines, but generally it's been a steady increase during the relationship we've had with the R.I. Economic Development Corporation ... in helping companies figure out their path to increase international sales.

PBN: Are there other factors that could be contributing to the rise in exports?



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FOGARTY: The dollar, definitely. Right now it's advantageous for companies to be selling their products and exporting their products because of the dollar. It makes it easier for other countries to buy our products [because the dollar is worth less than some foreign currencies]. But I believe the real factor is that ... many companies looked at how to increase their domestic business first. Now that ... the domestic market is saturated, they are looking to expand internationally.

PBN: What are some of the unique programs the Chafee Center is focusing on right now?

FOGARTY: We have a specific program called the CGBP (Certified Global Business Professional). ... It's the first national certificate program. It's very similar to the [Certified Public Accountant] exam, and we helped develop it with a national group. ... We now have seven or eight graduates ... and we want to grow that obviously for knowledge within the Rhode Island business community.

PBN: What about the program you will be rolling out in November with the Rhode Island Society of CPAs?

FOGARTY: It's going to specifically focus on the issue of how to do business with China or how to deal with the competition that evolves because of China. And this is directed to the CFO because many CFOs have questions. ... It will teach the CFOs what is going on in today's economy country by country.

PBN: What are some other prevalent programs you're working on now?

FOGARTY: Bank of America commissioned us to do Web casts and then to store them and archive them so that if you wanted to learn about international treasury management, export payments, document preparation for letters of credit, you can actually go on their Web site and view these. ... We did a five-part series for Bank of America on China this year.

PBN: Is this something that Bank of America will market only to their clients?

FOGARTY: They allow their business clients to have access to those Web casts. ... [But] they are also going to be putting these on their Web site so that anyone who's interested in the subject matter can go to the international section of Bank of America's Web site [and see them].

PBN: Why does the Chafee Center offer Webcasts?

FOGARTY: We do a lot of Webcasting because Bryant University has one of the most impressive communications studios in the whole country ... We have a lot of capabilities when it comes to teaching students, using student personnel to film and also to edit. So we can do this at a very affordable rate for our clients.

PBN: Why did the Chafee Center decide to partner with the Zana Network, an online business community, in June?

FOGARTY: We have partnered with Zana because Zana is a network concentrating on small and medium-sized businesses. It's a portal and it's meant to be interactive mainly through data, but they're also going to have a video section. ... They wanted

to partner with us. And partnering means they'll pay us for access to the [International Trade Data Network] and then they'll allow companies to have access to the data.

PBN: What do they charge?

FOGARTY: They'll charge the small to medium company a very affordable rate to have the same type of access that larger companies can pay for through a \$2,500 subscription to an information source.

PBN: Can't companies get access to that data through the Chafee Center?

FOGARTY: The International Trade Data Network ... we've been developing that since 1988. We were one of the first ones to aggregate information in an easy-to-use format ... You have to come through the Chafee Center to get access, but you can do that and also if you want the greater package of the Zana Network you can ... go through them to receive our information. And the Zana Network ... is a communication tool for them. It's interactive so they can say, "I'm a small business person, I need a new business plan or I have a question on IT selections," and you might get eight different answers from a business-to-business perspective.

Raymond W. Fogarty

Position: Director, John H. Chafee Center for International Business at Bryant University Background: Fogarty has worked for Bryant University for almost 28 years. At first he was hired as an assistant controller and accountant for the university. In 1983 he became associate director of the then Bryant College Small Business Development Center. In 1988 he became director of the R.I. Export Assistance Center and World Trade Center Rhode Island, both of which grew out of the mission set forth by the SBDC. The two entities have evolved into what is now known as the John H. Chafee Center for International Business. With Fogarty's guidance the center has developed several programs and functions, all geared to assisting companies increase international sales.

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