

Manufacturers reach future workers, customers through Mfg Day

Written by By Damon Scott for Finance New Mexico
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October 2017 marks the third year that Albuquerque-based window and door manufacturer Glass-Rite is participating in Manufacturing Day, a nationwide celebration of manufacturing and its impact on local economies.

“People want to see the manufacturing facility, so we walk them through it and try to have all the equipment operating — our automated glasscutter, frame welder — it’s what people are interested in,” said Steve Hoberg, vice president of sales and public relations for the company that employs about 30 workers.

Glass-Rite will open its doors to the public and student groups for tours on Oct. 25. “We also have groups of students from CNM once or twice a year as well,” he said, which can spur interest in future employment.

Creating interest in manufacturing careers is one of the core goals of Manufacturing Day. Many events are geared to students in an effort to excite young people about engineering, design and production careers.

Events are organized by New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership, a nonprofit organization that offers manufacturers training and expertise in efficient production and administrative practices that allow them to maximize their competitive edge. This year’s events include workshops, round table discussions and manufacturing facility tours that allow the public to see designs turned into products and products repurposed into other products.

Hoberg said the tours are more than just a feel-good activity for the manufacturer. They have

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provided the company with an important way to stay connected to current customers, add potential new clients and contracts, and open the door to prospective employees.

About 60 to 70 percent of Glass-Rite's business comes from residential projects, and the rest comes from the multifamily sector. Glass-Rite uses Manufacturing Day tours to demonstrate its fabrication processes to multifamily property managers and housing directors from the state's pueblos. "We've gotten some pretty good contracts out of it," Hoberg said.

Glass-Rite was formed in 1984. Hoberg and his brother, Bill, purchased the company in 1987. "We had a couple of trucks and a few saws at that time, making windows even back then," said Hoberg. Bill took over full ownership in 2011, allowing Hoberg to focus on business development.

Local referrals are an important source of business for the company. "We have competition from companies that are much larger and more national than us, that advertise extremely heavily," said Hoberg. "We don't have the national advertising allowance that these other companies do, so we have to work hard and make sure our referrals are solid and it's a lot of word of mouth as time goes on," he said. The company has also tapped into the New Mexico True marketing program, recently completing its certification.

Hoberg said that while the state is facing challenges that affect the economy, it's not all doom and gloom.

"From a manufacturing standpoint, New Mexico is a good place to locate. The labor pool is pretty good. From what I can understand, there's a huge desire for people to work with local companies — that's been beneficial to us."

The tour of Glass-Rite's 20,000-square-foot window and door manufacturing facility is one of about 50 events taking place in New Mexico in October. All public tours are free and can be found at <http://newmexicomep.org/mfgday>. The site links visitors to a corresponding Eventbrite page where pre-registration is requested.

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To learn more about Glass-Rite, visit <http://glass-rite.com/> .

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