

Written by David Young

CIRCLE OF EMPLOYMENT: AS KODAK CUTS JOBS, NEARBY WINDSOR BUSINESSES ADD THEM

WINDSOR—It's akin to the circle of life—one company is forced to lay off employees while another is hiring.

For some Northern Colorado employees, this dichotomy is playing out within mere miles of each other in the Great Western Industrial Park, as former Kodak workers are finding new jobs with Hexcel Corp.

In March, Kodak announced it would cut the motion picture film finishing Colorado operation and the printing plate manufacturing operations.

A total of 300 employees are affected by the closures, which are scheduled to be completed by the end of the year.

In late September, the company executed a portion of those layoffs when it shut down its motion picture film finishing operation in Colorado.

Kodak offered some employees the opportunity to transfer to other divisions around the country. It is unknown how many of those employees took advantage of that offer.

However, as Kodak sheds jobs in the region, others are hiring. Since 2005, the 1500-acre industrial park has added Owens-Illinois, Front Range Energy, Vestas and Hexcel.

Hexcel, a leading developer and manufacturer of composites that are used in the development of wind turbine blades, announced in December it would locate its prepress manufacturing plant in Windsor because Vestas Wind Systems, a wind-turbine manufacturing company,

is located in the Great Western Industrial Park in Windsor.

Hexcel moved into its new facility five weeks ago and is completing its qualification process and starting production within the next month.

Monday, sitting in a conference room with the Vestas building visible through the window, Yannick Parent, plant manager, said seven out of the company's 30 employees are former Kodak workers.

Jennifer Hopkins, human resource manager with Hexcel, said they received 2,600 resumes and conducted 86 interviews before settling on its work force.

Hexcel quality manager Steven Corbiere is a former Kodak employee. In April, he left Kodak to start a new career with Hexcel.

"I worked with a lot of guys who came over from Kodak and it seems to invigorate them to be able to come over from

a company on the decline," he said. "It is good for Hexcel, they have re-energized employees."

While Hexcel is fully staffed now, once it expands production early next year, it will be looking to add 70 to 100 more employees.

The common denominator companies such as Hexcel and Vestas have in common is renewable energy. With railroad access that connects to the rest of the country, renewable energy manufacturing companies are drawn to the area.

Kevin Cory, director of people and culture for Vestas American's Blades Manufacturing Division, said roughly 10 percent of Vestas' Windsor plant's work force also comes from Kodak.

Currently, the plant employs more



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CIRCLE OF EMPLOYMENT (continued)

than 500 workers. Of the 50 or so who are former Kodak employees, Cory said a majority work in production, but they reach to every department in Vestas' 400,000-square-foot facility.

Currently, Vestas is waiting for construction to be completed on its factory before it hires more workers. Cory predicted the company will hire an additional 150 to 200 employees early next year, and could hire more ex-Kodak employees at that time.

While Cory spoke highly of the former Kodak employees, he noted despite their experience in manufacturing, there is still a learning curve with Vestas.

"Nobody has actually built what we build. It's not just plug-and-play," he said. Kristie Martin, communications specialist with Owens-Illinois, said of its 210 employees, only one is from Kodak.

Kathy Dinkel, financial manager with Front Range Energy, said that they have not hired any of the Kodak's laid-off workers.

Upon total build out, the Great Western Industrial Park is projecting it will create about 10,000 jobs with a total investment of 2 billion.

Larry Burkhardt of Upstate Colorado Economic Development said the phenomenon of companies closing while others open is nothing new, however, the industrial has the capacity to sustain large industry regardless of the sector.

The employment that park has brought to bear in the last five to six years... is extremely significant, not only direct employment but the indirect employment the business-to-business activity generated throughout the economy," said Burkhardt, who estimated if the park has provided more than 1,000 jobs, its impact reaches throughout Northern Colorado, not just Windsor or Weld County.

He noted that access to rail is a large draw for the production companies that manufacture products for the renewable energy sector.

While unable to go into specifics, Burkhardt said there is ongoing inter-



est in the industrial park.

Rich Montgomery, vice president of the Great Western Development Co., said a key reason for the industrial park's growth is it is shovel ready, meaning the land is annexed, zoned and infrastructure is in place for prospective manufactures.

He also said the Great Western Railroad offers competitive pricing advantages for customers.

Montgomery acknowledged there is ongoing interest in the park, but would not specify what companies are eyeing the Northern Colorado location.

"Our primary goal at the park is economic development, bringing new industry, creating investment and new jobs in the community, and anytime that can offset a declining industry that is excellent benefit to the community," Montgomery said.



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