

Whitley Manufacturing, Inc.

Whitley Manufacturing in South Whitley, Indiana, was founded in 1946 to provide affordable housing for returning World War II veterans and their families.



WHITLEY MFG. AT A GLANCE

Year Established:
1946

Employees:
111 employees

Leadership:
Simon Dragan, President (above)
Drew Welborn, Vice President



Over the next six decades, the company expanded to serve a broad spectrum of markets, providing high-quality, architecturally appealing prefab buildings to education, healthcare, and commercial enterprises.

Today, Whitley Manufacturing is the nation's leading manufacturer of modular and prefabricated buildings, providing custom commercial buildings and temporary portable buildings to clients across the nation and overseas.

In early 2011, the company found itself at a crossroads. "We were looking to get into a new and different sector," said Drew Welborn, vice president of Whitley Manufacturing. "In particular, we were interested in contracting with the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), which has a wide range of space needs for permanent and temporary barracks, administrative buildings, training facilities, and the like."

The trouble was, Whitley Manufacturing was a victim of its own success. "We were so busy that it was difficult to find the time to focus on the long-term strategic planning necessary to map out the next stage of our growth," said Welborn. "Plus, like many mature companies, we were used to doing things a certain way and needed someone from the outside to get us moving in a new direction."

JOINING THE SBEI PROGRAM

The company turned to the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Initiative (SBEI)

program for help. "Generally, you think of SBEI as a program for start-up businesses that need help with the basics—which it most definitely is," said Welborn, "but the program can also help a mature company like Whitley Manufacturing evaluate organizational strengths and weaknesses with fresh eyes and refocus efforts in order to develop a solid plan for future growth."

Over the summer of 2011, Whitley Manufacturing and the SBEI consultants worked together to formulate a long-range strategic business plan aimed at defining and exploring new and different business opportunities and moving the company toward engagement with the military.

ACHIEVEMENTS WITH SBEI

In December, 2011 Whitley Manufacturing entered into a contract with the U.S. military to provide a 170,000-square-foot training center. As a direct result of that contract, in the six months since receiving the DoD contract, Whitley Manufacturing has added 44 jobs to meet the increased demand for the company's products, for a current total of 111 employees.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

"Engaging with SBEI was a really smart move for us," said Welborn. "Any company, whether it's a start-up or one that's been around for a while, can benefit from the increased focus provided by SBEI's team of consultants."