

Regulatory, Trade Assistance Hasten Global Growth for Chemical Company

Pharmaceutical giant Merck & Co. relocated Mark Grimaldi from the Northeast to Albany in 2000. His impression with the area was love at first site. Three years later, when he and his wife learned that Merck was closing its Albany plant, he decided to open his own company, Equinox Chemicals. But where would he put it?

“We had to decide whether to stay or move the company back to the Northeast,” says Grimaldi. “We looked into it and learned that from a business standpoint, there were tremendous advantages to keeping our company in Georgia.”

Equinox designs and prepares specialty chemicals for companies that use the materials as raw materials and finished products. “Our chemicals touch just about every industry in the world: foods, flavors, fragrances, pharmaceuticals, industrial chemicals, polymers, semiconductors, alternative fuels, government and other specialty chemical sectors,” says Grimaldi.

By May 2006 the business was thriving. Equinox Chemicals had five employees and monthly sales in the six figures. Grimaldi bought out his principals, and was looking at ways to aggressively pursue global sales.

At about that time, Dimitris Kloussiadis, an international business consultant with the Georgia SBDC Network, paid him a visit.

“With the SBDC’s help, we’ve improved our business systems in ways that are helping us cross growth thresholds where we need to comply with additional regulatory requirements” says Grimaldi. “For example, we are in a highly regulated industry. The SBDC has helped us comply with OSHA and EPA regulations along the way.”

The SBDC has also supported Grimaldi’s international trade efforts. “They helped negotiate with other countries for materials, gave advice on the information needed in contracts, and told us the pitfalls to watch for when bringing materials through customs,” he says.

“We have conducted extensive international market research to identify foreign buyers,” says



**GROWING
GLOBALLY:
Mark Grimaldi
of Equinox
Chemicals
is the 2010
Small Business
Exporter of
the Year in
Georgia.**

Kloussiadis. “We also assisted with international methods of payments, quotations and international shipping of hazardous materials.”

“When Mark recognized that his company would need operating money to fill larger international orders, we discussed export receivables credit insurance and the SBA’s Export Working Capital program. As a result of these discussions, Flint Community Bank of Albany provided them an international export revolving line of credit guaranteed by the SBA,” he says.

“When a snag held one of the company’s import shipments up at the New York ports, UGA’s International Trade Center and the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s Global Trade Division provided invaluable assistance in quickly having customs clear the shipment,” says Kloussiadis.

Export sales now account for 40 percent of Equinox’s business, and the company employs 32 people ranging from administrative staff to technicians and engineers to Ph.D. chemists.

“Mark is great with the follow up,” says Kloussiadis. “We provide the service, and he follows up.”

When Grimaldi talks to business owners in other states, he says they’re amazed that the SBDC offers its high quality services for free. “The SBDC is one of the best things about doing business in Georgia. Without their help, I wouldn’t have been able to grow as fast.”