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[The Free Library](#) > [Date](#) > [2012](#) > [September](#) > [30](#) > [The Register-Guard \(Eugene, OR\)](#)

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Byline: Sherri Buri McDonald The Register-Guard

Custom Craftworks, a longtime Eugene maker of massage tables, is embarking on a major expansion. It plans to triple its facility by moving early next year into a 63,000-square-foot space in the Greenhill Technology Park in west Eugene.

The move from 20,000 square feet of leased space at 760 Bailey Hill Road comes three years after Pivotal Health Solutions, a health and wellness company based in Watertown, S.D., quietly acquired the Eugene company, which still goes by Custom Craftworks.

Privately held Pivotal doesn't disclose financial figures, but local marketing manager Teri Sura said the 25-employee Eugene division "has done nothing but grow" in sales, product lines and number of products since the acquisition.

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Pivotal - which has 14 different product lines serving chiropractic, massage, spa, athletic training, medical and other markets - also has 26 employees at its headquarters and plant in South Dakota.

Pivotal's strength was serving the chiropractic market, whereas Custom Craftworks had served the massage market for more than two decades.

Together, the two companies reach a broader range of national and international customers, and there are many opportunities for each division to sell products to the other's customers, Sura said.

"Think about the cross-sale between chiropractors, massage therapists and athletic trainers," she said. "It was just a perfect synergy the way the companies worked together."

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In the past year, Pivotal introduced Athletic Edge, a new Eugene-made product line, including wood or lamine lockers and athletic taping stations, that can be customized with sports team logos. The line has caught on with high schools, colleges, major sports teams and athletic training camps, Sura said.

"Our business has really just boomed," she said. "From what I've seen so far, I feel the sky is the limit on this."

That has put the Eugene company's need for more space front and center.

"When you have 50 lockers or 50 taping stations, where would you put them and still be able to work?" Sura asked. "Right now, it's been a bit of a dance."

The new Greenhill location has plenty of production and warehouse space, as well as multiple bay doors for easy shipping, she said. About 17,000 square feet of the total floor plan will be office space, and most of that will be a showroom to display all of Pivotal's massage, physical therapy and Athletic Edge equipment, she said.

"It's going to be one of the largest brick-and-mortar massage stores on the West Coast, if not the country," Sura said.

Eugene businessman Ron Tinsley founded Custom Craftworks in 1986 and established a reputation for high- quality, U.S.-made massage tables. However, with market pressure from cheaper Chinese tables and the recession, Custom Craftworks' Eugene work force had dwindled to about 20 people, down from a peak of 80.

Over the years, several companies had looked at acquiring the company for its massage table design, with the intent of closing the Eugene facility and having the tables made overseas, Sura said.

After Pivotal bought the company for an undisclosed amount in August 2009, some of Custom Craftworks veteran employees wondered whether the South Dakota parent would close the Eugene site.

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"That was our fear when our brand became part of Pivotal Health Solutions," Sura said.

But Pivotal has invested in the Eugene division: in new machinery, marketing and now a much bigger facility, she said.

Pivotal officials declined to say how much they'll spend upgrading the space at 1050 Owen Loop South.

The building originally was constructed for Rosen Products LLC, which made aviation and auto components. It closed a decade ago. The building was later subdivided, and Oak Patch Gifts, corporate parent of the Jody Coyote jewelry brand, formerly occupied the space Custom Craftworks will lease. The building is owned by a Seattle- based investor group.

Custom Craftworks plans to set up there by February, Sura said.

Bob Reiter, vice president of sales and marketing at Pivotal's headquarters in Watertown, S.D., said Pivotal has been pleased with its Eugene acquisition.

"It gave us an opportunity to fast-track our participation in the massage and spa market, as well as gave us a great West Coast location for our import business" and to serve West Coast customers, Reiter said.

Although the company tries to carry as many U.S.-made products as possible, it

imports a variety of accessories, such as face rest covers, Sura said.

An expanded line of accessories under Pivotal's ownership helped the Eugene division weather the recession, she said.

"Massage therapists may not have purchased a new massage table during the recession, but they did buy oil holsters, bolsters and disposable face rest covers, Sura said.

The South Dakota parent also values the Eugene facility's expertise in woodworking, Reiter said.

"As we continue to expand in the massage market and athletic training, a lot of that product is wood-based," he said.

The Eugene company has benefited from the area's long history and deep skills base in wood products manufacturing, as well as the skilled workforce in recreational vehicle manufacturing, Sura said. Woodworking employees are cross-trained to work in upholstery, she said.

The Eugene site has added three production employees in the last couple of months. And if business continues to grow at this pace, "We could continue to add that many in the next several months," Sura said.

The company also plans eventually to add sales and customer service employees, preferably with an athletic or training background, to support the new Athletic Edge line, she said.

#### CUSTOM CRAFTWORKS

Founded: 1986 by Ron Tinsley

Owner: Pivotal Health Solutions of Watertown, S.D., since August 2009

Address: 760 Bailey Hill Road

Products: Equipment and accessories for massage therapists, chiropractors and athletic trainers

Employees: 25

Latest development: Plans to triple its space early next year by moving to 1050 Owen Loop South in west Eugene's Greenhill Technology Park

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