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Software firm upgrades FabTrol, which serves the steel industry, is moving into more spacious and open headquarters downtown

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An expanding local software company has moved into new digs in downtown Eugene in anticipation of more growth in the coming years.

FabTrol Systems is moving out of leased space in a historic building owned by the Lane Council of Governments at 1025 Willamette St. and into the open, modernist One East Broadway building owned by architects Greg Brokaw and John Rowell and retailer Kaz Oveissi.

The company has been growing rapidly since Dowco Group, a family-owned Canadian company, bought it in 2008, FabTrol sales and marketing manager Jennifer Duncan said.

FabTrol, which was founded by Eugene resident Douglas Cochrane in 1985, became a leading supplier of software that helps steel fabricators with estimating costs, project management,

drawing management, materials management and production control.

By the time Cochrane and his wife, Gerry, sold the firm, it had 35 local employees plus five in England, and more than 1,050 customers in 22 countries.

Duncan said she can't disclose customer information for competitive reasons. But, she said, Dowco President Ewen Dobbie carried out his pledge to expand FabTrol's international presence, including opening new markets in the Middle East, China and India; increase its staff by 10 to 15 percent — "We just added five new positions," Duncan said, including her own, bringing the payroll to about 40; and keep FabTrol headquarters in Eugene.

"I do think it's working for him," she said of the Eugene location.

The space at One East Broadway was attractive to FabTrol for several reasons, both tangible and intangible, Duncan said.

Its former space in the Schaefers building was divided into a number of offices, she said, a traditional layout that didn't work for the software company.

The space at One East Broadway, which was extensively remodeled in 2004, is more open, she said,

"It's a much more collaborative space than typical office space," she said. It allows people to better work together as groups, and groups to work together on overlapping issues, problems and solutions.

"In the software world, it allows us to do better innovation, we can innovate quickly and much more collaboratively," Duncan said.

That is important because innovation is a driver of the company's growth, said Duncan, who added that she didn't have square-footage figures for the old and new spaces, but the new headquarters location will give the company room to keep growing.

"We have the basement, the main floor and the mezzanine," Duncan said, with the option of expanding into the third floor, where Brokaw and Rowell have their offices.

The way the modern steel and glass building looks and is designed also is important to FabTrol, Duncan said.

"Our industry is the steel industry," she said. "This particular building has a lot of steel — that is relevant to the customers we serve."

The image the building — and by extension, FabTrol — portrays is important, Duncan said. “We have customers that come from all over the world. This is a marquee location for us.”

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