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(F1C)

MoTech

Auto repair training center going strong after Chrysler sale

By Anne Fracassa
special writer

MoTech Automotive Education Center, an automotive-repair worker training company launched by Chrysler Corp. in 1973, has consolidated facilities and enlarged its Livonia headquarters.

The changes were made to centralize operations since MoTech's April 1987 sale from Chrysler to Troy-based O/E Learning Inc., a computer training firm.

But the big news is the new automotive body school facility which was moved back to Livonia from the Eight Mile-Hoover area of Detroit after nearly a decade.

"MoTech has devoted a lot of time and effort for this project," MoTech Director Bob Henrikson said. "Not only is the facility new, but also it contains state-of-the-art equipment."

The 17,000-square-foot facility at 12615 Stark Road offers 24-week programs that run seven hours a day, five days a week. Courses specialize in automotive body repair. O/E retained most MoTech personnel hired during Chrysler's ownership.

"When we moved into this facility, we took absolutely nothing from the Eight Mile/Hoover school," Henrikson said. "We purchased new equipment and received consigned equipment from manufacturers so we could train on their machinery."

That includes a DeVilbiss down-draft paint booth, which provides air

'Our graduates go to work after they leave us.'

— MoTech's
Bob Henrikson

circulation to protect the operator and bakes the finish in 20 minutes.

The school also has Chief E-Z Liner, Pauline Bench, Dux-More and Car-O-Liner Unibody benches and frame adjusters to measure and pull the vehicle back to manufacturer specifications.

THREE PAINT mix stations — manufactured by DuPont, PPG Industries and R&M Inc. — allow students to learn proper mixing techniques with equipment from the automobile industry's three major suppliers of automotive paints.

The auto body school provides an 840-hour program, encompassing 24 weeks of training at a cost of \$5,040. Upon completion of the course, the graduate is awarded a certificate and is offered placement services by MoTech.

"Depending upon how adept our people are and how quickly they can perform their technical skills, it's feasible to make a \$200 to \$2,000 per week salary," Henrikson said. "Our graduates have been placed in 49 states during our 15-year history."

The MoTech placement services



Ray Dees of Detroit works on a wheel housing under the instruction of Walt Geisler of Livonia at MoTech's auto body facility in Livonia.

ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

work with graduates on a one-on-one basis. Many companies ask MoTech for its graduates because of the school's credentials. For every job, only one applicant is sent, ensuring minimal competitiveness among graduates.

"We've worked with some employers for more than 10 years, and they hire our graduates because they know exactly what they're getting. They know they need a specific type of person who'll get the job done right. Our graduates go to work after they leave us."

SIXTY PERCENT of the current 700 students are 18-20 years old, with little job experience. Forty percent are 24-50 and are seeking re-training or are changing careers.

The International Industry of Car Autobody Repair uses the facility to train or retrain workers dealing with new models. IICAR represents new car dealers and trains people in the proper procedures to repair vehicles when the new model year emerges.

"IICAR has used us for a good number of years because we have a reputation of turning out quality

graduates who know their trade in the industry. "We're definitely proud of what we do here."

Along with the auto body repair school, MoTech also has another 40,000-square-foot education center located around the corner at 35155 Industrial Road, which teaches auto mechanics.

Courses include automotive services, engine technology, chassis, drive trains, front-wheel-drive technology, electrical systems, automotive electronics, fuels management and automotive skills development. "The learning experience is nearly

on-the-job training because we use actual vehicles," Henrikson said. "The education center provides a certificate in automotive technology, needed by every mechanic."

The course, 900 hours, takes nine months to complete and costs \$4,995. Classes begin every other month, and financial aid is available.

Both the education center and the autobody school are licensed by the state's Department of Education and are accredited members of the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools.

France opens shop in Troy

By Anne Fracassa
special writer

U.S. manufacturers seeking expansion in France don't have to call the Paris Department of Economic Development to find an ideal overseas location.

Companies needn't look further than Troy-based RDI of America, a three-employee firm financed by a consortium of municipalities in France to lure jobs and commerce overseas.

"We represent French communities with the goal of creating joint ventures, or direct manufacturing," said Robert J. Bondy, vice president of RDI in Troy. "Think of us as the economic development agency for central France in the U.S."

RDI of America is a subsidiary of Recherche et Developpement International, based in Paris. Five employees are based in France.

"We work with companies interested in expanding their markets or opening foreign subsidiaries or offices," Bondy, a French citizen, said. "If a company wishes to leave the states with the purpose of relocating in France, we probably wouldn't work with it. We are not here to displace American workers."

Bondy said France is in a state of economic boom right now, and this is the perfect time for companies to consider facilities abroad. Those already helped by RDI of America include Scott Paper, Honda and John Deere.

"The French government is dynamic, and the country is moving toward its goal to become the industrial nerve center of western Europe," Bondy said. "The business environment in France is stable, and there is plenty of financial flexibility."

RDI's Troy office, in the Liberty Center at Big Beaver and Livernois, opened in July 1987. The company had been working since 1984 through a joint venture with another American company.

ALTHOUGH BONDY refused to disclose any companies RDI is working with because they had not made public their intent to expand to the European market, he said there were "several" in the metropolitan Detroit area RDI has been in touch with.

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— Robert J. Bondy

"Possible companies that would be interested in us include any company looking to the West to expand or grab a foothold in the European market," he said. "That would be any company from automotive-related to biochemical or pharmaceutical."

He said 60 percent of the office's contacts are made through cold calls. The remaining contacts are inquiries.

The company also aids French companies wanting to come to the U.S. to do business.

"We are presently working with G2M, an automotive paint booth supplier, and Graphisoft, a software manufacturer," Bondy said. "Both plan to open offices in the metropolitan Detroit area."

"If we look at who we're working with now, I would say our success rate would be very high. On the economic development side, however, it takes more than two years to realize a goal. It's a very slow process."

Because RDI has only been in operation 10 months, revenues were not available. Officials refuse to disclose revenue projections and clients for the Troy office.

But the company has opened another division here that promises quick revenue turnaround and has sparked interest in the industry.

"Last month we opened a merger and acquisition department geared toward French and American companies looking to purchase or sell. It's become an increasingly important facet of our business and has generated astounding interest."

RDI HAS BEEN well received by the American business community, according to Bondy.

"With the large French community in the Detroit area we have established a wonderful relationship with the state," he said. "We're not paid

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