

BUSINESS

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 1993

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SUBURBAN BUSINESS LEADERS

Soter (Art) G. Liberty, P.E. has been named the recipient of the Institute of Industrial Engineers (IIE) Fellow Award. Liberty, adjunct professor at Lawrence Technology University and president of S.G. Liberty Associates Inc. received the award which recognizes distinguished service and leadership qualities that contribute significantly to the industrial engineering profession.



Liberty

It represents the highest level of membership in the Institute. Liberty has been a pioneer in the development and use of manufacturing information systems.



Burton

Rod Burton has joined Stone & Simons Advertising as executive vice president. Burton will participate in agency management and new business development.



MacBeth

Rochester Hills resident Jim MacBeth has been promoted to associate creative director servicing the GM Parts account at D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles/Bloomfield Hills advertising agency.

MacBeth joined the agency in 1984 as a copywriter servicing the Cadillac Motor Car Division, MichCon, and Kirsch accounts. He worked on the agency's Pontiac Motor Division, Florida's Transworld Delivery (FTD), and GM Parts accounts prior to his current promotion.



Cordes

Rochester Hills resident Julio Cordes has been promoted to senior account executive at DMB&B Public Relations.



JIM RIDER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Buttons galore: Ken Czar, president of Button Exchange, describes his business as the largest in the country in terms of licensed button sales. He's manufactured and peddled millions over the years.



His buttons are a-burstin'



By DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

Ken Czar, president of Button Exchange in Rochester, knows the financial ins and outs of the promotional button business.

He knows, for instance, that he can wholesale buttons to retailers for no more than 60 cents apiece. He knows that before he produces

the buttons and hustles retail customers, he must reach licensing agreements to use copyrighted images and pay royalty fees ranging from 8 to 10 percent of sales. Advance payment often is required.

He knows that he pays his sales representatives a commission of 10 to 15 percent. Then there's production and ad-

ministrative costs including materials and labor, which he knows all about but declines to detail.

"There is no typical (profit) margin," Czar said. "The higher the volume goes, the higher the margin."

When you do the math — "we're now shipping 2,000 to 3,000 orders per week, probably, each order... an average of 400 buttons," he said — it adds up to a lot of money for a lot of people including Button Exchange.

"Over the next five years, we want to do a consistent \$10-\$12 million a year," Czar said. "We've got our base, good in-house people, good in-house

systems and a great partner with OSP."

Czar and OSP (One Stop Publishing), headquartered in southern California which bills itself as the largest manufacturer of licensed posters in the country, joined forces in March of 1992.

A perfect match

Czar, 41, had been a founding partner in another company, Button-Up, for about a dozen years. That firm grew gradually by pumping profits

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Southfield-based Maxitrol Co. expands its operations overseas

You don't last 47 years in business without foresight and the man who gave the gas industry the "Straight-Thru-Flow" regulator is looking to take his company into the next century by going international.

Frank Kern Jr., who founded the Southfield-based Maxitrol Co. in 1946 and remains active in its day-to-day operation, has acquired selected assets of a controls manufacturer in Quedlinburg, Germany, formerly owned by the East German government.

Maxitrol purchased desired product lines of Mertik Regelungstechnik with an investment package of \$4.69 million. The new subsidiary is called Mertik Control GmbH & Co. KG, and will initially employ about 170 people in Quedlinburg.

"The acquisition complements Maxitrol's traditional expertise in gas industry controls," said company spokesman Patrick Duhin. "More significantly, it provides diversification into other controls besides gas, strengthens our product development capability and bolsters access to international markets."

Maxitrol, which has manufacturing plants in Colon and Blissfield, has its primary product

lines in low pressure gas regulators and electronic gas flame modulation systems. The products are components for industrial, commercial and residential gas-fired equipment which is sold to original equipment manufacturers, contractors, utilities and distributors.

Mertik, founded in 1877 and still the single largest manufacturing employer in Quedlinburg, produces a wide variety of pressure and temperature control systems for household appliances, industrial equipment and transportation.

The merger is in keeping with Maxitrol's plan to increase international cross marketing.

"We see this as a company-wide project that should bring increased revenue to the business and additional security to everyone," said Larry Koskela, vice president for international operations, who will move his family to Quedlinburg later this summer. "Eventually, people at all our facilities will feel an expanded sense of connection. We will try to integrate the strengths of each of the business centers."

Koskela expects sales for the new Mertik Maxitrol subsidiary to be about \$15 million for 1993.

Maxitrol first became aware of Mertik in 1989 through contact with the Michigan Department of Commerce. In October of 1991, Maxitrol opened talks with the Treuhandanstalt, the German government agency charged with privatizing former East German firms.

"The employees are happy with the new privatization and can see our dedication to the company," Koskela said. "Our visible presence during the months of negotiations helped establish trust."

Koskela said the German workers have solid technical and manufacturing skills, but need help in other areas of business.

"As a former eastern block company, they need our contribution of marketing know-how," he said.

Koskela said that one of his first objectives will be to establish distribution of the subsidiary's products beyond its traditional markets in the former East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia initially to western Germany and western Europe.

Helping with the venture will be Koskela's wife, Bonnie Kern-Koskela, Frank Korn's daughter. She will head the international marketing projects.

Study hails value of job safety plans

(AP) — Companies that aggressively promote on-the-job safety lose far fewer workers and profits — to disabling workplace injuries, a study released last Friday found.

Even businesses that tried just 10 percent harder to improve safety had 17 percent fewer lost workdays and better productivity, according to the Michigan Disability Prevention Study.

Those that rated themselves as putting 10 percent more effort into programs to get injured workers back on the job cut lost workdays by another 7 percent.

Rochelle Habeck, the study's principal author.

The three-year study by experts at Michigan State University and the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research was done under a grant from the state Department of Labor.

The study confirmed what researchers suspected five years ago: Far fewer claims were filed by companies with a greater commitment to safety and those with programs to help get injured employees back to work.

One of the 220 Michigan companies whose safety practices were reviewed in the latest study had filed about \$300,000 worth of worker's compensation cases a year before it got serious about safety.

Since then, the unidentified company has cut those costs to

\$3,000, a savings that has helped it grow and add new workers, the study found.

"Gov. John Engler praised the new report and said he hoped it "will encourage more employers to implement safety programs that protect workers, reduce costs and create jobs."

That's still a challenge for Michigan, the new study found: Lost workdays due to illness or injury at Michigan companies have risen steadily since 1982 and now average about 92 lost workdays per 100 workers each year.

Companies should take more decisive steps to train workers in safety and modify furniture and equipment in offices and on factory floors to cut down on repetitive stress injuries, the report recommends.

Hassle-free shopping zone ahead.



Would bet you'd describe your *last* new car buying experience as something other than relaxing. The word "trust" probably didn't come to mind, either. Well, if those are qualities you'd appreciate at your *next* new car showroom visit, may we suggest you look for the sign above?



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9301 Massey Dr.
1-275 & Ann Arbor Rd.
313-453-7890

SATURN of SOUTHFIELD
29929 Telegraph Road
313-354-0001

SATURN of TROY
1804 Maplelawn, Troy Motor Mall
313-643-4350

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7830 Convention Blvd.
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