

# PROVIDENCE BUSINESS NEWS

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## MAIN STREET

# From design to building and managing, Cobalt is growing

BY BETHANY COSTELLO

STAFF WRITER

Step over the nails piled just inside the door, walk around the air duct hanging from the ceiling, and then bang a hard left at the exposed wiring and you enter the makeshift office of Jon Daskam and John Laquale.

An old desk covered with color sketches is used as a conference table as the two owners of Cobalt Industries talk about their latest project – the creation of the new Aloha Asian Restaurant at the Lincoln Mall.

And while most relatively new business owners would be nervous about meeting in such a barren environment, for Daskam and Laquale there is no better place.

“This is the best part,” Laquale said, looking around the recently gutted storefront. “This is where it all starts. The best part of this job is looking at the plans and then making them work with the space and the budget you have.”

Introduced by a mutual friend more than three years ago, they came together at a time when the construction industry was booming. Laquale, the company’s vice president, who had more experience in construction, handles the project management side of the business, while Daskam, who holds the title of president, handles the company’s marketing, among other things.

Together they have created a full-phase, concept-to-completion construction and project management firm.

Part of their success they say is that they are willing to try just about anything – in any industry. Having worked on private homes, apartment buildings, theaters, restaurants, and even athletic facilities and golf courses, the two have a very diversified portfolio.

“We have dabbled a little bit in everything,” Daskam said. “But it’s been good because we have met a lot of people.”

And making connections, according to Laquale, is what it takes to make it in the project management business. In fact, it was because of previous relationships in business that Cobalt was able to get the Aloha Asian Restaurant contract.

“We had worked with Judd Brown Design on another project, and knew that they did a lot of restaurants,” Laquale said. “It was because we had developed that relationship, that we were able to pursue this project.”

## COMPANY PROFILE

### Cobalt Industries

**LOCATION:** Oakland Beach Avenue, Warwick

**OWNERS:** Jon Daskam, president, and John Laquale, vice president

**YEAR FOUNDED:** 1999

**EMPLOYEES:** 5

**TYPE OF BUSINESS:** Construction and project management company

**ANNUAL REVENUES:** WND

It also helped the Laquale and Daskam promised restaurant owner Charles Chin that the company could save Chin close to 30 percent on the renovation without comprising the integrity of the project.

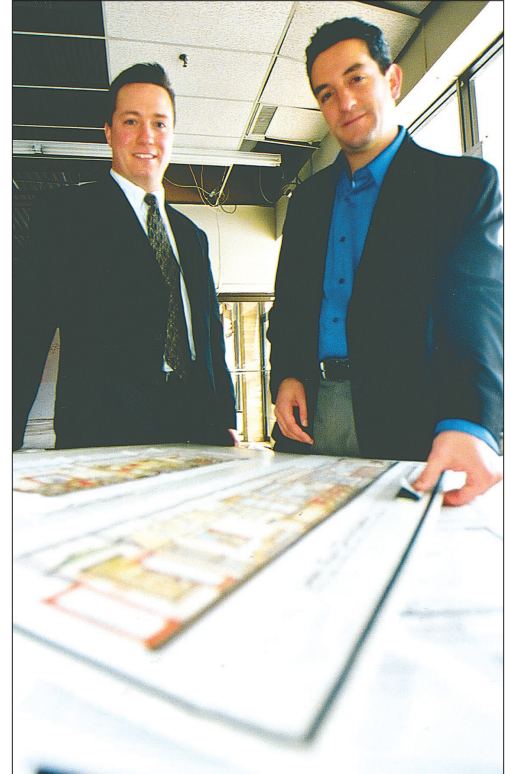
That’s their job. Acting as the interface between the designer and the owner, Cobalt’s has to find a way to implement the plans created by designers at a price the owners can afford. For Laquale and Daskam, it’s one of their greatest challenges.

“Budgeting has to be one of the most difficult things,” Daskam said. “Owners fall in love with these plans and then we have to find a way to make it happen. We need to work with the contractor and the architect to find the lowest possible cost for the same aesthetic value.”

Just about to enter its fourth year of operation, the company has already experienced a fair amount of change. Started primarily as an interior design firm, today they focus mostly on construction and project management. And while a large chunk of the company’s business used to come through its Ludlow, Mass. office, today it’s the home office in Warwick that is booming.

“This is what happens,” Daskam said. “The daily challenges of the job help you to evolve. The bottom line is that we are doing a good job for our customers, and they in turn are presenting us with more opportunities.”

Those opportunities have continued to come despite an economic climate that hasn’t been easy on the construction industry. With a staff of only five, at times both say it



PBN PHOTO/TOM CROKE

**COMFORTABLE** in their unfinished offices in Warwick are Jon Daskam, left, president and John Laquale, vice president, of Cobalt Industries.

has been challenging.

“You have to wear multiple hats, there is no doubt about that,” Laquale said. “You have to have your phone on all the time, and you are in constant contact with what is happening.”

For right now they are comfortable. Working on projects that fall into the \$1 million to \$2 million range both feel the company has found a niche.

“A lot of other local companies deal with much bigger projects,” Laquale said. “We are definitely tapping into the smaller projects.”

“Maybe someday we will build up to that level, but right we are happy where we are,” Daskam said.

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