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Meet the Merchant

Interview by Luke Whittaker | lwhittaker@crbizjournal.com

Goldsmith Company

Peter Goldsmith

Phone: 503-319-4457

Website: Goldsmithcompany.com

When and how did the business begin?

“The business started in 1930 with my grandfather Archie Goldsmith.”

How long have you been involved?

“We had a warehouse in old Chinatown in downtown Portland. I basically grew up there, going to work there during the summer and running around on the weekends. I just fell in love with the business. After school I joined the company, in 1979-1980.”

Since starting in the 30s, how has the business changed or evolved?

“It started as a wholesale fabric supplier and slowly morphed into men’s and women’s apparel, notions, sewing gear and domestics — an old-fashioned term for linen and bedding. Back in the day, the company sold to retailers. This was before big box stores. In a town like Portland, you would have two or three dozen merchants selling soup to nuts and they bought from the Goldsmith Company.”

“As a part of the mix of merchandise, the domestics (linens), the hotels would come to use and buy white towels, sheets, blankets, mattress pads. They (hotels) started asking where they can get a lamp, mattresses and drapes, so my dad progressed into furnishings for hospitality in the early 70s. Today we sell both the linen and the furniture.”



What accounts for the majority of your business today?

“It’s about 60% lodging and hospitality, including cruise ships, hotels, motels, resorts and bed and breakfasts. We’re very fortunate being in business so long to have a lot of repeat customers big and small.”

What’s the biggest difference with the business today from when you first started?

“Definitely the internet. It’s given our customers

an excellent tool to shop. The savvy customers will often come back to us because they know we’re very reliable and only sell products that hold up over time. In my mind, it doesn’t make sense to buy cheap because there’s no low in the towel business. You can buy really cheap towels and sheets but you end up replacing them sooner than later.”

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