

Covelli Centre Turns Corner on Performance

Popular shows, cost-cutting measures mean more dollars.

Record-breaking attendance at several shows and cost-cutting measures last year contributed to the Covelli Centre achieving its first operational profit in its four-year history, JAC Management Group LLC reports.

The Struthers company, which with SMG of Philadelphia operates the city-owned arena, began 2009 looking for a naming rights partner and a hockey team. General Motors chose not to renew its naming rights agreement and the SteelHounds hockey team, the arena's anchor tenant since its opening, had dissolved.

By midyear, two local business operators stepped in to fill both roles. Covelli Enterprises in Warren signed a three-year commitment to serve as the naming rights sponsor, and Bruce Zoldan, owner of BJ Alan Co., brought

his new Youngstown Phantoms, a United States Hockey League team, to the Covelli Centre.

To ensure financial stability, JAC Management undertook several cost-cutting measures, including energy conservation and employee furloughs during the off-season, says Bridget Wolsonovich, director of marketing.

The Covelli Centre had a dozen sold-out events among the 100 scheduled last year, she notes. Those events included record-setting attendance for the Harlem Globetrotters and the championship bout between Kelly Pavlik and challenger Marco Rubio before a crowd of 7,000.

One casualty of the year was the Mahoning Valley Thunder, the AF2 arena football team that ceased operations after three seasons.

The arena has retained many of its sponsors and added new ones, Wolsonovich says. These include Dental Express, Apostolakis Auto Group, Akron Children's Hospital, Holiday Inn-Boardman and Naffah Hospitality.

SenSource Forecasts 30% Growth in Sales

Company counts on its counting machines.

SenSource, a technology company based in Youngstown, exceeded its sales goals in 2009, leading to a 20% increase in staffing and a more extensive line of products.

The company specializes in equipment that counts the number of people visiting stores, gaming and entertainment centers, libraries, museums, schools, hospitals and clinics, the number of vehicles entering or passing a designated area, and environmental and industrial sensors.

Serving such a wide range of industries provides SenSource with a cushion that shields it from fluctuations in the economy, observes Lauren Gallo, director of marketing and sales. Some sectors, such as retail, which may suffer greatly during a recession, may also stand to benefit the most from the services SenSource provides.

"SenSource products offer technology that helps [these companies]

make the types of decisions needed in a downturn," Gallo explains. "Providing companies with real facts on traffic to their stores allows them to evaluate which properties are most valuable."

Among the new clients SenSource acquired last year are The Ohio State University, Louisiana State University, Gander Mountain, Disney, Vitamin World, Deb Shops, Advance Auto Parts, Sportsman's Warehouse and the Greater Cleveland Rapid Transit Authority. SenSource also continues to expand its portfolio of international clients, Gallo reports, with sensors operating in more than 40 countries.

As a result, 2009 sales topped \$3.1 million, a 25% increase over 2008. A product-support specialist and a marketing coordinator were also hired, Gallo reports.

This year, sales are expected to grow 30% as new clients are added and existing clients expand their use of SenSource products, she says. She also expects at least two more employees to be hired.

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