

NJSBDC at Bergen Community College (Bergen County)

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Vince D'Elia, JeanMarie Tenuto, Brenda B. Hopper, John Updike Jr.

John Updike came to the Bergen SBDC in March 2003 and met with Assistant Director Jeanmarie Tenuto, to discuss the prospects of buying the construction business where he had been an apprentice. The owner, Anthony Gallo, now 81, became ill over the last year, while their number one client, a multinational corporation headquartered in New Jersey was continuing its indefinite moratorium on construction and refurbishing so revenues for Parlon Contracting were declining at a rapid rate. It was the first time in the company's history that something like this had happened since opening in 1969.

"Since I started in 1980 as an apprentice working for Anthony Gallo I always had a dream of owning my own company like many carpenters do," said Updike. "However, most carpenters, including myself, have absolutely no idea of how to run a

business. Mr. Gallo made it seem easy. I never realized how much was involved until I actually started doing it.”

When Gallo wanted to retire he offered to sell the company to John and John took him up on it, finalizing deal in April 2003. John was excited, but also had a few problems. He needed a loan to carry the company for a short period of time and restructure the company’s direction to obtain new business.

John and his wife began to plunge their savings into the business after being rejected by two different banks. While researching alternatives, John discovered the Bergen SBDC in Smart Start Your New Jersey Business by Oasis Press.

Things began to turn around when the SBDC connected him with Columbia Bank and he obtained a loan and revolving line of credit backed by the SBA to adequately provide the company with the leverage it needed. Concurrently, Parlon’s number one client restarted construction work and awarded Parlon with several new contracts.

Now John has a vision of expanding this business, hiring more employees from the Carpenters Union, seeking NJ School Construction Corporation projects and he is presently applying for SBE certification.

“I firmly believe that the SBDC is one of the most underrated resources for businesses, ” said John.