



Rulon International completes plant expansion

By Colleen Jones
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Rulon International, an industry leader in the manufacturing of suspended wood ceiling and acoustical wall systems, marked another milestone Wednesday in the company's nearly four-decade history.

The St. Augustine-based company recently completed an expansion of its on-site plant, increasing the footprint of its 85,000-square-foot headquarters by another 27,000 square feet.

In doing so, the company is adding about 20 more manufacturing jobs. The plant currently employs about 140 people.

The St. Johns County Commission approved a \$129,000 economic incentive package for the expansion. The \$3 million project added more floor space and material storage areas to the warehouse.

Wayne Robison, president and CEO, spoke at the ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday about Rulon International's beginnings and how the company was able to scale its growth so successfully.

Robison, who was in the roofing and coating industry in the early 1980s, recalled how he met a couple of businessmen at a trade conference who were looking for a way to distribute their unique wood paneling and ceilings from the Netherlands to the U.S.

Robison was eager to incorporate it under the umbrella of his own company.

"Within a couple of years, it was the tail wagging the dog," Robison said.

The company soon dropped the roofing end of the business.

"We took on the product line, and we grew," Robison said.

Rulon International began doing stateside manufacturing out of a site in Brunswick, Georgia. After outgrowing its Georgia headquarters, Rulon opened a newly built space in the World Commerce Center north of St. Augustine in 2006. The recent expansion will allow its growth into the future.

“We can finally see the [plant] floor again,” Robison joked.

Many of the company’s high-profile clients include performing arts centers, universities, airports and museums.