

Northwest Laboratories Offers High Quality Dental Products at Discount

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By David Murakami

Northwest Laboratories has quickly grown into one of the largest dental distributors on the West Coast. Acting as a middle man to the largest dental laboratory in the world, the Bellevue based company is able to offer the highest quality at competitive prices.

Northwest Laboratories functions as a west coast sales and service operation for the largest dental laboratory in the world. The lab is located just outside Hong Kong and employs over 2,800 technicians that specialize in cosmetic and implant products, including: porcelain, ceramic veneers, crowns and bridges, removable dentures and partials, and orthodontic products.

What separates Northwest Laboratories from the other 14,000 dental labs around the country is the ISO 13485 certification. In the Washington, there is no regulatory oversight for dental products. It is up to the dentists to check the labs. The ISO 13485, which is strictly used for medical products, is a global certification which requires tracking lot numbers of raw materials through to the end patient for five years. This allows the patient to know what products are going into their mouths and where they came from.

"We are one of only 320 labs that are certified in the U.S." said CEO and founder Patrick Tessier. "Our product is safer due to the high certification."

Tessier started in the paper business, working for Weyerhaeuser and eventually starting a sheet box plant in South Seattle. As the industry started to shrink, Tessier decided to branch out to a more stable industry. He was approached by a head-hunter who introduced him to the dental laboratory industry, which seemed to be a perfect fit to apply his BS in Mechanical Engineering from Washington State University and MBA from University of Washington, as well as work experience in management.

"I've always dreamed of having my own company," said Tessier. "We have gone from one customer five years ago to the largest lab in Washington and doing business in 26 states."

The quick ascent is attributed to the low capital and high labor nature of the business. All of the products are handcrafted by professional who have been working with porcelain and ceramics for years.

"It's like a college," said Tessier, referring to the lab in China. "They've figured out how to teach the craft to a large group of people... We are in the top 2% quality wise. Because we make our products in China, our cost is significantly lower which allow us to lower the prices for dentists."

Northwest Laboratories also has a small lab in Bellevue for repairs. The lab consists of a handful of technicians as well as an in house dentist.

The company has received accolades from the business community for their business model. In 2008, Northwest Laboratories ranked ninth on the 100 Fastest Growing Private Companies and Washington's Best Workplaces for the small business category in the *Puget Sound Business Journal*.

For more information, visit nwlabs.net.
