

BUSINESS

Amazon opens ‘sortation’ center

By Jay Greene
The Seattle Times

KENT, Wash. — As Mike Roth steps into Amazon.com's newest warehouse here, he spreads his arms wide and asks what is different about this facility from the 96 other warehouses the Web giant operates around the world.

To anyone who has ever set foot in one of those 1 million-square-foot buildings, known in Amazon parlance as fulfillment centers, the answer is obvious. There is not a product in sight. No books. No toasters. No toothpaste. There aren't the rows and rows of shelves on which those products are shelved. There aren't any workers who stow the products, pick them from the shelves or box them up.

Instead, the newly opened Kent warehouse is teeming with sealed parcels, full of items Amazon customers have ordered. Those packages zip along a maze of conveyor belts, where computers and workers sort them to ultimately deliver them to individual post offices in Seattle, Portland, Ore., Spokane, Wash., and points in between.

By controlling the delivery process right up to the last mile, Amazon can get packages to customers on Sunday, a service it announced with the U.S. Postal Service last November. And with the opening of the Kent facility, Sunday delivery has begun in the Pacific Northwest.

“When you see us announcing Sunday delivery, you can assume a sortation center is close by,” Roth said.

The “sortation center” also lets Seattle members of its \$99-a-year Prime subscription service order as late as 11:59 p.m. to get two-day shipping at no extra charge. That's

nine hours later than the previous cutoff time for two-day delivery. Non-Prime customers in Seattle also can use the later cutoff order times for two-day delivery if they are willing to pay for the service, which starts at \$1.99 an item and climbs depending on size and weight.

In addition to the Kent facility, adjacent to a site where Amazon is building a new fulfillment center, the company has quietly opened sortation centers in Atlanta; Dallas; Houston; Phoenix; Avenel, N.J.; Hebron, Ky.; and San Bernardino, Calif., in recent weeks. By the end of the year, Amazon will have more than 15 sortation centers, all in the United States, according to Roth. Each will employ several hundred workers.

“There's going to be very rapid growth in the next couple of months,” Roth said.

The sortation centers make sense only because Amazon has grown so large. The company won't disclose how many packages it ships daily, nor will it say how many go through the new Kent facility, except that it will be “tens of thousands” a day. It's that massive volume that makes it financially feasible to control the shipping on so many parcels right up to the last mile. It's unlikely any other online retailer has enough volume to even try their own sortation center.

“Our size and scale now allows us to optimize more of the fulfillment service,” Roth said.

Increasing the speed of delivery is a top priority for Amazon. The retail titan can offer many advantages over brick-and-mortar rivals. But the one glaring disadvantage is that the local bookstore, electronics chain or toystore can offer instant gratification, letting

customers immediately walk away with the product they purchased.

Sortation centers move Amazon a step closer to erasing one of the key barriers to customers shopping online. Ultimately, Amazon would like to handle next-day delivery from the Kent site, something a company spokeswoman said is possible from other sortation centers.

The facilities enable Amazon to hold on to packages much farther down the delivery chain. In the past, Amazon might have shipped a DVD ordered by a Seattle shopper, for example, from its fulfillment center in Sumner, Wash. There, workers would have boxed the item and handed the package off to one of several carriers, such as UPS or FedEx.

Now, Amazon will put that DVD onto a truck that will bring it, along with tens of thousands of other packages on other trucks to this Kent site, generally within a day or so for items that are shipped two-day delivery.

Amazon workers, then, sort all the packages by ZIP codes, place them on pallets and deliver them to local post offices — for now, the new sortation centers will deliver only to U.S. Postal Service offices — by 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. to arrive in that day's mail.

“We can control the packages much longer,” Roth said.

And control is key for Amazon. Last holiday season, Amazon was singled by UPS shipping delays that left some customers without gifts under their Christmas trees. UPS acknowledged that it was unprepared for the volume of packages it received. Those delays led Amazon to refund shipping charges and offer customers a \$20 gift card.

SINGLETARY
from 1E

their weight as normal, according to a newly released survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics. About 81 percent of overweight boys and 71 percent of overweight girls thought that they were about the right weight.

“Childhood obesity is a major public health problem associated with many adverse health outcomes in adulthood,” the CDC report said.

There is so much emphasis on people's financial well-being, and this is good. You have to save and many of you need to be saving more than you are now. But don't just focus on your financial needs. Think about your physical well-being too.

Let's just look at diabetes. More than 29 million people — about one in every 11 in the U.S. — have diabetes, according to a report out of the CDC released last month. And about one in four of those with diabetes don't even know they have it. Diabetics have an increased risk of serious health issues, including vision loss, heart disease, stroke and kidney failure.

The CDC also found 86 million adults have blood-sugar levels high enough to be classified as prediabetic. Without making some changes in their lifestyle — exercising and a better diet — 15 percent to 30 percent of these folks will develop Type 2 diabetes within five years.

“Keeping healthy indirectly improves your finances by reducing health care costs,” Green said. “Increases in oxygenated blood throughout your body help with mental focus.”

In 2012, diabetes and its related complications accounted for \$245

billion in total medical costs and lost work and wages, up from \$174 billion in 2007, according to the CDC. The medical costs for people with diabetes are twice as high as people without the disease, according to the center.

I'm telling you about my aquatic classes because I know that for some of you, exercise can be hard on your joints. It is for me in part because I have arthritis. But I've found I can do more and push myself harder in the water.

“Aquatics fitness decreases joint pressure and increases mobility,” Green said.

And don't think aqua classes aren't strenuous or challenging. You can burn anywhere from 200 to 1,000 calories depending on the aquatics fitness program you choose, he said.

I'm not just preaching to you about this issue. I'm telling myself the same thing. I've put on weight. I don't eat as healthy as I should. I wasn't exercising enough. I had to make changes.

At the end of every aqua spin class, Green calls us into a circle in the shallow end of the pool. We raise our aching arms and repeat something he learned from a former football coach: “One team, with one goal to win. Let's get it done. Let's get it done.”

One goal. Become financially and physically fit. Get it done.

Readers can write to Michelle Singletary c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20071. Her email address is michelle.singletary@washpost.com. Follow her on Twitter (@SingletaryM) or Facebook (www.facebook.com/MichelleSingletary). Comments and questions are welcome, but due to the volume of mail, personal responses may not be possible. Please also note comments or questions may be used in a future column, with the writer's name, unless a specific request to do otherwise is indicated.

Company spotlight

LightGabler LLP
Jonathan Fraser Light and Karen Gabler

Product or service: Legal services (employment law advice and litigation; intellectual property)

Address: 760 Paseo Camarillo, Suite 300, Camarillo

Date established: May 2, 2011

Hours open: With email, 24/7

Telephone: 248-7208

Email: info@lightgablerlaw.com

Website: http://www.lightgablerlaw.com

Number of employees: Eleven attorneys including partners, as well as three paralegals and three administrative staff.

Franchise fee or startup capital paid: \$150,000

Estimated annual gross revenue: \$3.5 million

Person answering this: Jonathan Fraser Light and Karen Gabler

What prompted you to start your own business?: Desire to have a smaller boutique firm focusing on employment law needs on the management side, to have

more control over client service, stronger relationships with clients and a more hands-on approach to mentoring our junior attorneys.

What is your educational and career background?: Jonathan Fraser Light: 33 years as a trial lawyer, consulting on behalf of management for employee issues; graduate of UCLA and UCLA Law School. Karen Gabler: 23 years in practice providing employment law advice and litigation defense to management employers; graduate of the University of Hawaii and the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawaii.

How much research did you do before starting your business?: Some research related to small law firm management, although Light had several years of management experience from his prior law firm.

What were the most helpful sources, including websites?: Consultants on various subjects (leasing, business operations, law firm management) who we had known from our prior business



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jonathan Fraser Light of LightGabler conducts an in-house employment law and litigation training for his attorneys and paralegals.

and client connections.

When were you the most discouraged?: Never. Well, maybe at the end of the first month when our billing software wasn't ready and we had to do hundreds of bills manually.

What company or individual do you admire?: Light: Can't say

that I have thought about that. There are some solid lawyers in the county whom I admire, but if I single them out they will get a big head and I might forget someone.

What will make your business stand out from competitors?: A team-oriented approach to ensure quality work and timely

client service. Lawyers are notoriously bad about prompt return of calls and emails. We have an integrated team of lawyers who regularly back each other up, to make sure that someone is always available for client emergencies. We also focus on providing workplace solutions for clients, instead of simply telling them what they can and can't do under the law.

Who is your target client base?: Any employer of virtually any size in any industry throughout California. We have clients with employee counts ranging from one to tens of thousands over numerous industries spread all over the state.

Businesses less than one year old can be profiled in Who's New in Business. Businesses older than one year can be profiled in Company Spotlight. Those owning franchises in the region can be profiled in Franchise Focus. Only businesses that have never been profiled in The Star may participate. For more details or the questionnaire, email freelancer Maria Saint at mcsaint73@yahoo.com. Please put the word “Questionnaire” in the subject header.

Business briefs

CALABASAS

Finance association honors water agency

The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada has awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District for its 2012-13 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

The certificate is the highest form of recognition in the field of government accounting and financial reporting.

In addition, an Award of Financial Reporting Achievement has been presented to Joseph P. Lillio, the district's finance manager.

The district's report is at http://www.lvmwd.com.

The association serves over 17,000 government finance professionals.

The district provides potable water, wastewater treatment, recycled water and biosolids composting services to residents of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Westlake Village and adjacent unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

MOORPARK

First Bank appoints resident senior VP

City resident Karen Brown has joined First Bank as a senior vice president/team leader in the commercial lending group in Woodland Hills.

Brown will oversee

relationship managers and new-client solicitations.



Brown

US Bank, Pacific Western Bank and 1st Enterprise Bank. She also was a senior auditor and collateral manager with Barclays Business Credit.

First Bank is a privately owned bank with \$5.89 billion in assets and 130 locations in California, Missouri, Illinois and Florida.

OXNARD

Family law expert to be of counsel

Schneiders & Associates LLP has hired Deborah Perkins, a family law attorney, as of counsel.



Perkins

Perkins graduated cum laude with a Juris Doctor degree from Pepperdine University School of Law and graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. Perkins is licensed to practice law in California and Florida.

SIMI VALLEY

Volutone to provide Sony electronics

Volutone, a regional

distributor in the Southern California and Nevada territory and member of the PowerHouse Alliance, on July 1 again became a distributor for Sony Electronics to select audio/video specialty retailers and custom installers in the Southern California and Nevada regions.

Volutone will provide warehousing, support and training for Sony products.

Kicking off the new agreement, Volutone is presenting its first new Sony training classes throughout August at each of the seven training facilities in Southern California and Las Vegas.

To learn more about Volutone, visit http://www.volutone.com.

Allstate donates \$2K to nonprofits

Two Simi Valley Allstate agency owners received Agency Hands in the Community Awards for helping others. With these awards came a \$1,000 grant from The Allstate Foundation to nonprofits.

The grants went to California Waves Inc. on behalf of agent Robert Ives and to the Western National Parks Association on behalf of agent Dennis Biscoe.

Free Clinic appoints attorney to board

The Free Clinic of Simi Valley has appointed Donald C. Erickson, a senior litigation attorney, to its board of directors.

Erickson was a senior partner at Arter & Hadden. He was involved in

the PG&E chromate — “Erin Brockovich” — litigation. More recently, he was senior litigation counsel and litigation manager to a major title insurance company. In 2010, he was nominated by the Consumer Attorneys of Los Angeles in 2010 for its Street Fighter of the Year Award.

Erickson graduated from Marina High School in Huntington Beach, where he met his future



Erickson

wife. They have eight children and eight grandchildren. He received his Bachelor of Art degree in history from UC Santa Barbara in 1972 and his Juris Doctor from the USC Law Center in 1976.

For more information about the Free Clinic of Simi Valley, visit http://www.FreeClinicSV.com.

VENTURA

Curves owner adds franchise partner

City resident Penny Donswyk, owner of Curves Midtown Ventura, has signed up for her sixth year as a franchisee with Curves International and taken on a new business partner, Tricia Wilson, of Oxnard.

Wilson has been her club manager for several years and was a Curves Circuit coach and employee before Donswyk bought Midtown Curves. Wilson is also a Curves/

Cleveland Clinic Certified Weight Loss Coach.

Curves will be celebrating its fifth anniversary and Wilson's new ownership position all month at the 2611 E. Thompson location. For more information, call 641-9600.

WESTLAKE VILLAGE

3 executives join HR consulting firm

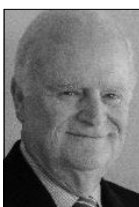
Michael Bennett, April Perry and Larry Colson have joined Jo-Anne



Bennett



Perry



Colson

Smith & Associates Inc., which helps with organizational changes in businesses and careers.

Bennett is an executive career coach. As vice president and chief financial officer of a neurosurgical medical device company, he led an integration process for a \$120 million acquisition by Medtronic.

Bennett graduated from Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business with an emphasis in corporate finance.

Perry is vice president of business development.

Perry consults in professional coaching, sales, business development and marketing. Most recently, she managed the Los Angeles and Metro professional coaching staff for DBM, a global outplacement and executive coaching firm.

Colson is the company's newest executive coach and organizational change consultant. Colson previously worked as global vice president of human resources in public and private organizations. Colson received his bachelor's degree from CSU Northridge and his MBA from USC.

For more information, call 432-7663 or visit http://www.joannesmithandassocinc.com.

New Aviaara agent to sell in L.A. County

Aviaara Real Estate has hired Sean Perry. Perry



Perry

will focus on the Oak Park, Agoura Hills and Westlake Village areas.

Perry may be reached at 418-2565 or Sean@Sean4Homes.com.

Aviaara has been in business since 2004. To share news about your company or business-related organization, email dajustesen@vcstar.com. If there is an event involved, please email the information at least three weeks in advance.

