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## **Team A**

### **Reaching Zenith: By Re-Focusing, One Company Finds New Opportunities**

A shrinking sales volume year after year might seem like a bad omen for some companies. Not for Zenith Glass.

The Baltimore-based glazing company's owner Arbed Yvel says he's fine with lower sales—as long as it means more profit. And it has.

“Instead of investing in parts of the business that aren't as profitable, we started to focus on the sectors that are,” says Yvel.

For 13 years, Zenith Glass concentrated on commercial glazing services. In the early 2000s the company enjoyed a healthy construction environment, taking on a variety of mid-rise projects in the Baltimore area.

Over the next decade, though, things began to change. Not only did construction slow, eventually falling into the Great Recession, but Zenith also found itself up against some major competition.

Given his company's mid-Atlantic location, Yvel says the curtainwall construction business was becoming increasingly difficult. He was losing jobs to bigger contract glaziers in nearby cities including New York and Philadelphia, and it was tough to compete.

“I was a little fish in a big pond,” Yvel says. “It was time to make some changes.”

So he did.

Halfway through 2013, the company decided to shift its focus.

Builders in Baltimore and surrounding areas had a number of retail projects in the works, and that's when Yvel decided to pursue that market.

“We went after those clients,” he says. “Not just for the initial install, but we were able to establish a relationship with those owners that gives us an ongoing service agreement. If a storefront panel breaks, we fix it,” he says.

Since 2012 his company's profit has increased nearly 90 percent, from \$1.9 million to \$3.6 million. At the same time, expenditures dropped more than 37 percent from \$12 million to \$7.6 million.

"The way things were going, it was only logical to make the switch," he says. "We just weren't growing in the curtainwall market."

Focusing on storefronts and replacement work has more than made up the difference. In fact, Zenith Glass secured major ongoing contracts with new construction near Under Armour's international headquarters in the city's south side, which has helped maintain profits. Yvel expects to break \$4 million in 2015.

"We're at the point right now where we literally can't take on any more work. Our schedules are booked through August," Yvel says.

The growth doesn't seem to be slowing down any time soon—even after August. The Charm City is also in the midst of a mini-tech-boom, which is already luring more opportunities.

"It's a great time to be in Baltimore—but even more so, it's a great time to be a replacement glazier in Baltimore," Yvel says.