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Garber Metrology's new building sits at 520 E. Oregon Road near Lancaster Airport.

Weigh to go

Garber Metrology sees its new first-class building as a reflection of its commitment to state-of-the-art products and service.

Jay Garber weighed the pros and cons of building a new headquarters for his firm, Garber Metrology.

But in the end, the 44-year-old president and chief executive officer saw it as a way to set a new standard for a company built on making sure all kinds of things measure up.

Garber Metrology distributes a range of weighing and counting equipment, and it calibrates and repairs such devices for the businesses that own them.

In May, the company moved from Greenfield Corporate Center to a new \$4.3 million headquarters at 530 E. Oregon Road, near Lancaster Airport.

The building, with distinctive sleek, architectural elements, puts Garber Metrology under the same roof as a nonprofit organization and a self-storage business.

For Garber, it was chance to make a statement about the company that his parents began in 1975 as a service and repair shop out of their East Lampeter Township garage.

"I think it comes down to legacy. Why does anybody do anything? You're either going to be known for something good, something bad or nothing at all. And I wanted to be known for something good," Garber said.

The new building, which resembles an airport hangar from the outside, has some 20,000 square feet of space for Garber Metrology, nearly double the size of the former location.

The building also has 33,500 square feet for Airport View Self Storage, a 180-unit self-storage facility that the firm created to generate extra revenue.

And there's 2,000 square feet of space for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lancaster County, which Garber serves as a board member. The new space gives the nonprofit double the space without a rent increase.

"We actually have room. Before we were literally boxes up every wall. Now we have space to breathe," said Liz Conway, the seven-person organization's executive director.

The building itself has an open feel with daylight in every office and a sunlit lunch room that evokes a café. In the construction, elements including concrete walls and duct work are exposed.

Garber said he wanted the building and its 2.8-acre site to have a campus atmosphere. So there are touches such as rooftop verandas, walking trails and a waterfall.

But many of the Manheim Township building's customized features reflect the unique needs of Garber's company, formerly Garber Scale & Calibration.

One room in the building has tight temperature controls to keep it constantly at 68 degrees so metal being calibrated doesn't swell or contract even a little bit.

In another area, a garage bay houses a block that weighs precisely 20,000 pounds and a cart coming in at exactly 5,000. The block is put on the cart and driven across truck scales to calibrate them.

Garber said businesses use the firm's services because small measuring variations can add up to big costs.

Plus, getting a third-party certification can lend credibility with customers. And while the services may not be cheap, getting it exactly right still means something, Garber said.

"We deal with customers that care as much as we do about the accuracy of their equipment," Garber said.

While Garber declined to give sales figures, he said the company has seen consistent growth.

One factor that could spur growth is a change in the way the state certifies the kinds of equipment that Garber Metrology checks.

Currently, Pennsylvania maintains a Division of Weights and Measures, which inspects devices in 49 counties and oversees the 18 counties — such as Lancaster — that have their own official sealer.

But with the thousands of pieces of equipment that need certifying, the state is beginning to shift some of the work to private companies.

So, instead of just checking and calibrating equipment, firms like Garber Metrology actually would certify equipment.

Earlier this year, the company changed its name from Garber Scale to Garber Metrology, reflecting the shift from mechanical devices to equipment that gauges such measures as temperature, pressure, dimension and torque.

"I always describe this business as a niche little business that you don't even think about," Garber said.

And with the new building, Garber said his business could double in size, especially because most of the firm's 28 employees spend their days in the field.

In the short term, Garber said he expects to add three employees for the firm that maintains satellite locations near York and Gettysburg.

"In my industry ... there is not a facility that probably matches this anywhere," Garber said.