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## The latest in innovation at Quonset Business Park - by Steven King

March 13, 2020 - Rhode Island

Steven King

Quonset Business Park has been a hub of innovation since the 1940's, when the Davisville Naval Base housed the Naval Construction Battalion. The "Seabees" as they are called, invented pontoons that became the "ship-to-shore" solution for landing forces in World War II, leading to successful Allied landings in Sicily, the Normandy beaches, and in numerous Pacific islands. More famously, the Seabees invented the Quonset hut, a structure that filled the Navy's need for an all-purpose, lightweight building to house soldiers and protect materials at far-flung bases and be assembled without skilled labor. Quonset huts are still in use today all over the world.

Fast forward to 2020, and Quonset Business Park still prides itself on fostering innovation at a place that has grown to 12,000 jobs at over 200 companies. Leaders across Rhode Island agree that Quonset Business Park is one of the leading engines of economic development and job creation in the state.

Goods iQ is the latest innovator to call Quonset Business Park home. A global leader in the development, manufacturing and distribution of office, academic, industrial and consumer goods, their products include name brands such as Bostitch Office, BLACK+DECKER, PaperPro, It's Academic, LockerMate, Written Word Pencil Company and Stanley. Their selection of Quonset Business Park reflects the park's focus on customer needs.

Formerly known as Amax Incorporated, Goods iQ moved their corporate headquarters from East Greenwich into one of the Gateway Office Buildings to support the company's next phase of growth. According to president Gary Blanchette, the company needed "a new space and identity that reflected its evolution, and would support it in future endeavors to drive expansion and attract elite talent."

Blanchette envisions Goods iQ utilizing technology to continue to expand on the ECommerce side of their business, working with giants like Amazon, Target, Walmart and Staples to sell the next generation of office, lighting and industrial products online. Goods iQ has invested over \$2 million in

IT automation technology in the past 10 years, a modernization that allows their global team of 350 employees to compete with larger companies.

Quonset was an ideal location for Goods iQ's corporate rebrand. Blanchette envisions growing their team in the next year, additional acquisitions and moving some of their manufacturing operations to Rhode Island. Quonset's Gateway district offered the flexibility to create the best office space for their current and future goals. Their headquarters is a modern space, complete with a full kitchen of snacks, beverage dispensers, a ping pong table, ample collaborative space, standing desks and an outdoor courtyard.

Quonset has multiple site options for new companies looking to move into or expand in Rhode Island. Gateway Offices Building #5 recently began construction, offering prospective companies a customizable space like Goods iQ's. The Flex Industrial Campus Building #2 was finished in late 2019, offering companies who may have outgrown their current facilities flexible manufacturing or warehouse space between 10,000 and 40,000 s/f. They are equipped with office spaces, restroom facilities, and high bay space for manufacturing, assembly or warehouse use, with ceilings up to 24 feet.

Quonset's location makes key transportation routes easily accessible for Goods iQ's customers and employees.

QDC has supported numerous upgrades to Rte. 403, providing easy access to I-95. Blanchette employs a partially remote sales team, and regularly meets with customers, so TF Green Airport, only 15 minutes away, makes business streamlined. Also located in the Gateway District, less than a mile from Goods iQ's headquarters, is a Towne Place Suites by Marriott, a convenient lodging option.

Blanchette knows that if Goods iQ is to continue its growth in the ECommerce space, they'll need young talent to help them stay ahead of the curve and grow with the company. Rhode Island is home to 12 colleges and universities, providing a workforce pipeline.

Lastly, Blanchette enjoys the public amenities offered for his employees, which fosters their new innovative corporate ideology and creative spirit. Employees at the Business Park have access to a 2.4 mile bike path, four public beaches and the 18-hole North Kingstown Golf Course, along with the Gateway retail shops with food and dining options.

The QDC aims to provide our over 200 companies with every tool they need to grow and succeed. My team is excited to welcome Goods iQ with a home base that accelerates their growth and creativity.

To learn more about how the QDC can provide a similar environment for success, visit our website.

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