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Michael Bassirpour of GLR Advanced Recycling in Roseville developed *The ScrapPost.com* to move scrap metal via a digital portal. See page 36.

Metal Portal

How a recycling business in Roseville offset a steep drop in global commodity prices.

BY R.J. KING |  NICK HAGEN

When prices for copper, aluminum, iron ore, and other commodities began to fall in 2013 due to a slowdown in demand from China and developing countries, Michael Bassirpour saw an opportunity to inject technology into a historically stoic industry.

A partner and president of GLR Advanced Recycling in Roseville, Bassirpour says with falling prices for commodities contributing to the closing of hundreds of scrap metal shops in recent years, he and his three partners — Sandy Rosen, Ilene Bischer, and Ben Rosen — had to adapt or risk the same fate.

“I was working on a Saturday in 2013, and we (were selling) these lead counterweights that are used on the back of forklifts, and I thought, What if we had people bid on them over a digital portal?” Bassirpour says. “So I ran the idea by Sandy and, the next thing you know, we built and introduced *TheScrapPost.com*.”

Today, with more than 1,500 subscribers across the globe, the online network allows buyers and sellers of scrap metals to access or move inventory much more quickly than they can by depending on the daily fax report commonly used in the industry. “All the fax report provides is the metal offered for sale, the suggested price, a company name and location, and a contact person with a telephone number,” Bassirpour says. “Can you imagine a service like that ... that doesn’t include an email?”

GLR’s online store has one drawback. Because some metal offerings are so heavy, transportation costs between states and countries can be prohibitive. Overall, though, Bassirpour says *TheScrapPost.com* has helped industry players move their metals faster, especially when prices are volatile. This year, the site is on pace to record \$5 million in revenue, up from nearly \$1 million in 2015.

Overall, the shakeout of smaller players caused by falling commodity prices has helped streamline the marketplace. Apart from streamlining the acquisition and sale of commodities with its digital portal, Bassirpour says GLR, which has 150 employees, is building a more efficient operation



» **TEAM ALLOY**
GLR Advanced Recycling partners Michael Bassirpour, Ilene Bischer, and Sandy Rosen at the company’s 15-acre facility in Livonia.

in the region by establishing what he calls “feeder yards” that supply inventory to the company’s main recycling facility in Livonia.

“We just opened a feeder yard in Port Huron, and we receive metal from Roseville and Ann Arbor. We’re looking to add two more yards in the coming months,” he says. “We plan to add another 50 employees and keep everything within a 60-mile radius of southeast Michigan.”

The company also operates an electronics recycling facility in Oak Park, and has locations in Northville Township, Flint, and New York that can handle metals and used paper, cardboard, or plastics. “We had to pivot our business model and take advantage of technology efficiencies,” Bassirpour says. “We couldn’t keep doing things the old way.” **db**

Brain Gain

THE UNIVERSITY of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy’s new \$16-million STEM center in Detroit could easily be mistaken for a research and technology center operated by a Tier 1 automotive supplier.

The four-story, 40,000-square-foot facility houses biology, chemistry, and physics labs; classrooms and an assembly area for the school’s eco-car and robotics programs; and mills, lathes, and other engineering equipment. It replaces a one-story structure that adjoined the school’s main edifice.

“The overall theme of the STEM center is exploration,” says Fr. Theodore G. Munz, UDJ’s



» **ADVANCED TRACK**
The University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy in Detroit added a \$16-million STEM center (middle building).

president, during a recent tour. “We had labs spread around our campus, and this puts us on par with any high school in the country.”

Tom Totte, vice president of institutional management, says UDJ officials toured several

universities and high schools to benchmark the design and layout of the new complex, which was paid for with private funds. “One of the components we added, based on conversations with Cranbrook Schools (in Bloomfield Hills), was to add chambers with glass doors so students could safely pass their chemistry projects from one room to the next,” he says.

The 900 seventh- and eighth-graders enrolled in the academy have a dedicated classroom and laboratory in the new facility, while their high school peers occupy the rest of the structure. “As a college-prep school, we felt it imperative to prepare our students for the next road on their scholastic journey,” Totte says. ■ — *R.J. King*