

BUSINESS LI

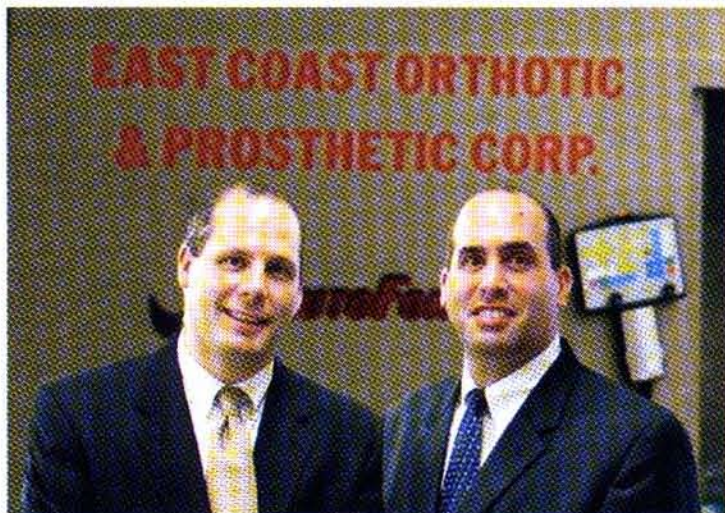
The Official Magazine of the Long Island Association

www.longislandassociation.org

tech talk

Technology, Service Builds a Medical Business

In 1997, armed with a background in sales and an interest in health care, Vincent and Lawrence Benenati started East Coast Orthotic and Prosthetic Corp. in a small office in Elmont. Along with just four employees, the two built up the company slowly. Less than seven years later, the business has grown to a new location in Mineola and now boasts a staff of nearly 40 people. "Through word of mouth," said CEO Vincent Benenati, "we've gotten bigger and bigger."



Vincent (left) and Larry Benenati's clients range from infants to injured athletes to the elderly.

Today, East Coast serves patients in hospitals across the Metropolitan New York area, including Columbia Presbyterian, Children's Hospital of New York, Westchester Medical Center, Brookdale Medical Center and New York University Hospital. On a typical day, Vincent Benenati, who is a certified orthotist, sees patients with a variety of needs, from children who need to be fitted for braces to correct scoliosis to amputees who are getting a second chance at a full life with a prosthetic limb. And this certainly isn't a nine-to-five job; East Coast is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Often, area hospitals will call East Coast when trauma patients are brought in who simply cannot wait until regular business hours to be fitted for the orthotic or prosthetic device.

According to Benenati, the majority of the work done by East Coast is orthotic-related. However, since the cost of producing a prosthetic is far more than that of an orthotic, percentage-wise, the disparity in the amount of sales between the two is small — about 40 percent of East Coast's business is prosthetic-related, while 60 percent is related to orthotics.

One of the things that has certainly given East Coast an edge in the orthotic/prosthetic market has been the company's adoption of the technology available to the orthotic/prosthetic community. According to Benenati, East Coast is one of the only orthotic/prosthetic providers in the New York area to have a full-service, computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacturing system. In fact, East Coast was the second facility in the United States to purchase a Medico Carver — a fully-automated CAM system — to produce orthotics and prostheses. In addition, East Coast uses the TracerCAD system — a portable, plaster-free orthotic and prosthetic CAD system that allows the orthotist to trace the body and make all clinical modifications directly on the patient.

Traditionally, when a patient requires an orthotic device, the orthotist must first make a cast of the part of the body that will use the device. Then, there is a waiting period while the cast dries — which usually takes about 12 hours. Only then can the process of manufacturing the orthotic device begin. To add to this, there is usually a period of fine-tuning — making sure the device fits the patient exactly. With the TracerCAD system, the orthotist or prosthetist can use a device shaped like a wand and scan the body part that needs to be fitted. Then, using the Medico CAM system, a foam mold can be carved in less than 15 minutes. Benenati says a job that used to take up to 10 hours can now take only two or three. And the accuracy provided by the CAD/CAM system is most often unparalleled; the Medico CAM system carves within 1/1000 of an inch accuracy.

With its nearly 10,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility in Mineola, Benenati says that the company is looking to make its mark on a new territory — Long Island. The company's new location — which is further east than it's ever been — is definitely a factor in this goal. "We're definitely looking to expand," Benenati says. "We're ready." □

By Erica Iacono