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Trade Center Celebrates 30 Years of Helping Foreign Firms in the U.S.

by *Phil Bolton* | December 13, 2013

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From left to right: Max Kichniaw, business development at gatc Ip; John Woodward, senior director of foreign investment at the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Gerd W. Kichniaw, CEO of gatc Ip, celebrate the 30th anniversary with a ribbon cutting. [Enlarge]

The **gatc Ip**, which stands for the **Global American Trade Center**, celebrated its 30th anniversary Dec. 5 as an in-house, full service provider and operator for overseas companies seeking to establish a presence in the **U.S.**

Its expansion in the U.S. was to have begun in **Baltimore, Md.**, but was diverted to **Atlanta** by a chance encounter at a trade show in **Orlando, Fla.**, between its CEO **Gerd Kichniaw** and **Eike Jordan**, founder of the Atlanta chapter of the **German American Chamber of Commerce** based in **New York**.

An ambitious businessman from **Düsseldorf, Germany**, Mr. Kichniaw told **Global Atlanta** during the celebration at the company's facilities in **Tucker** that he saw the need for a U.S. based partner to assist foreign firms that wanted to enter the U.S. but that often were confused by business practices here.

"Germans often think they know the best way and have the best products, but that attitude is not always the best way to enter a foreign market," he said, acknowledging that gatc has managed to be a successful bridge between markets.

While many of gatc's clients are German companies they also have had many from **Switzerland** and **Israel**. Among the companies with which they have partnered are the German-owned firms **Hera Lighting LP** and **Teamtechnik GmbH**, the Swiss firm, **Nolax Inc.** and Israeli-owned **TIBA Parking LLC**.

"Germans often think they know the best way

Dr. Jordan, who has been honored both by the state of Georgia and the German chamber as a visionary, was in complete agreement about the opportunity, but counseled that Atlanta might be a better location than Baltimore.

He cited a series of Atlanta's advantages such as a lower cost of living, the absence of entrenched unions, the potential for economic growth and the plans for an international airport as well as a desire among local officials to provide incentives to attract foreign investment.

With the inflow of foreign investment increasing precipitously including some of Germany's largest companies, Dr. Jordan left the chamber in 1985 to start his own firm, **Jordan Interstart Inc.**, which offered incubator-type services.

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"We have remained best friends," he told Global Atlanta during a telephone interview in reference to Mr. Kichniawy, whose gatc has partnered with more than 100 companies over the past three decades.

"And we never met head-to-head for a particular client. We always had fundamentally different views of what we wanted," Dr. Jordan said with gatc providing sales and marketing capabilities along with administrative services while Jordan Interstart was more inclined to provide administrative services only.

Gatc currently has 36-40 employees with associations of as many as 50 more who work in the offices of its clients.

According to **Immanuel Otterski**, a business development officer for the privately-held firm, gatc helps international companies with a wide variety of services including market entry, expansion and restructuring of their operations.

He said that he is especially proud of the company's reputation for providing foreign companies "a fully functional" overseas subsidiary in one business day.

It has 20,582 square feet of warehouse space full of its clients' products and 17,222 square feet of administrative space in Tucker on Atlanta's northeast side.

Mr. Otterski told **Global Atlanta** that the company plans to increase its client base specifically with companies from the **United Kingdom, Italy and Austria**.

He also said that Atlanta provides a good location beyond the widely recognized reasons especially for auto suppliers because of its accessibility to **Spartanburg, S.C.; Tuscaloosa, Ala. and Chattanooga, Tenn.**, where Germany's largest auto manufacturers have significant operations.

"By coming to Atlanta, they can be close to everything without being captive to one particular company," he said in reference to auto suppliers.

John Woodward, senior director of foreign investment at the **Metro Atlanta Chamber**, also attended the 30th anniversary celebration.

He told Global Atlanta that he considered gatc's record here as "a foreign direct investment success story in and of itself, which is compounded by all of the international companies that it has helped bring to the U.S. and specifically to Atlanta."

"Many of these companies who first entered the U.S. through Atlanta have stayed on," he added.

For his efforts to create jobs in Georgia and the U.S., Mr. Kichniawy was awarded with the honorary citizenship of the state of Georgia. In addition, he has been honored with the German government's Order of Merit.

For more information, call Mr. Otterski at **770 493 9305** or send an email to Immanuel.otterski@gatcjp.com



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