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# This local company is growing thanks to changes in retail, office space

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With retail storefronts and office space being redesigned as a result of the pandemic, business has been booming for VIRA Insight.

The company, which designs and manufactures retail and commercial environments, says it grew 21 percent during 2020, with more growth expected this year. The company declined to share revenue numbers. To support this growth, VIRA Insight has opened a new headquarters in Lewisville. It currently has about 185 employees in North Texas with plans to hire as many as 80 more over the next two years.



VIRA INSIGHT

VIRA Insight grew 21 percent in 2020 despite the pandemic.

"There's no denying that Dallas just has a massive amount of talent. There's a very diverse group of individuals here that allow us to add to our team," said CEO Jeff Jones during an exclusive interview with the *Dallas Business Journal*.

Besides its new 350,000-square-foot Lewisville headquarters, the company operates other facilities in Michigan, New Jersey, California and China. It has about 215 employees worldwide. VIRA Insight was founded in Manhattan Beach, California in 1996 and has been headquartered in North Texas since 2000, most recently in Coppell.



In his recent interview with the *Business Journal*, Jones discussed what retail and office clients are looking for in their new spaces, who some of the company's clients are and how supply chain issues have impacted business.

**How has your company been able to help retailers reinvent their storefronts and what kinds of things are clients looking for in these redesigns?**

It's a question we get asked quite a bit and a lot of retailers are always asking us what

others are doing. We seem to be the common denominator between a lot of retail companies. Everyone for the most part is reinventing their space. What we've seen over the last 12 months, or since the onset of COVID, is that the way people are shopping today is much different. You could buy online and pick up in-store or do some type of delivery service, which really has created a reason for retailers to reinvent the way they're actually marketing and selling to the customer, not just online but also at a physical location.

It's not just getting the customer to pick up an item but getting that customer to stay longer and to walk out with something extra. It's been exciting for us just because over the years there's been a lot of negativity around brick and mortar. Now, there's a vast reemergence in redesigning the retail space to fit the ways consumers shop today.

When you walk into a store today, within the first 50 feet, there's an opportunity for a customer to pick something up. Because customers aren't making their way to the back of the store, retailers are having to rethink the traffic patterns within their stores. Before, the expensive products like TVs would be placed in the back of the store to get people to walk through the entire store. Now, a lot of that logic has changed because they're not necessarily making it to the back of the store.

### **Have you been doing similar redesigns for office users? If so, how are they rethinking their space?**

That's one of the larger opportunities we've seen come out of COVID. We saw it in our own space when we were designing our Lewisville facility in April. We designed it with certain things in mind like flexibility, hygiene, and six feet of separation. In the early 2000s, tech companies like Apple and Google led the open office concept. While that was great and it led to a lot of collaboration, we've seen a lot of customers come to us looking to change that a little bit. They don't want people right next to each other, but they still want that open office feel. They just want to keep in mind the safety of their employees.

We just completed about 60,000 workstations for a very large financial company in the U.S. where we went into their office buildings and reconfigured all of their desks with that hygiene and flexibility in mind. Within the last eight to 10 months, we've seen a big push for that reinvention of not just retail space but also commercial

environments.

We do business in all 50 states, from Amazon in Seattle to Walgreens in Chicago, CVS in Rhode Island to Walmart in Arkansas.

### **How did the pandemic impact your business?**

We learned very quickly that we needed to transform the way we did business. We closed for about a week last year, but when we were considered essential, we began producing many different types of retail displays and products for our customers in order to get their stores back open.

### **Have supply chain issues impacted your business at all?**

I think supply chain has been the number one effect to our business in general. It's not that we're not able to get supplies or we're unable to produce products because we don't have the available supplies, but it's really just made us plan differently. We used to plan six weeks to three or four months in advance for a particular item or project. Today, we're planning 10 to 12 months in advance to make sure that we're allotting time for shipping and potential delays.

*This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

#### **Ryan Salchert**

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