

# SELLING TO THE SAUDIS

## CALIFORNIA COMPANY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by Erin Butler

U.S. Commercial Service

“We started in our house,” recalls Jamal Qureshi of the business he and his wife founded in 1998. Like so many entrepreneurs, the Qureshis started small — but had big dreams. Their export-only company, JQ American Corporation, supplies machinery parts to oil and gas companies in the Middle East; they have also expanded their reach to medical equipment and health products.

Qureshi, who worked in the Middle East for 15 years before starting JQ American, was familiar with the business practices and culture of the market. According to Qureshi, U.S. products, considered “top of the line,” are in demand in the Middle East. But there are major hurdles as well. JQ American must compete with much larger companies, many from Japan and Europe.

Getting started wasn't easy. Luckily, Qureshi's business savvy led him to the Oakland U.S. Export Assistance Center, where he began working with center director Rod Hirsch. This office, a part of the Commerce Department's U.S. Commercial Service, is one of more than 100 in the U.S. offering export consulting and support to small and medium-sized U.S. companies. “We were really very fortunate to have the help the Department of Commerce gave us,” says Qureshi. Help that includes market research, trade leads and export counseling. “We consult with the Oakland Export Assistance Center on

every major overseas inquiry to convert it into real business,” says Qureshi.

Hirsch not only “helped me to identify demand,” says Qureshi, but “guided us to receive continuous contracts from the major oil and gas industries” in the Middle East. Qureshi also praises the partnership between the U.S. Commercial Service and the Export-Import Bank, which provides export financing to smaller companies. “It has helped us increase our sales,” he remarks. Qureshi also used an ad in a recent medical equipment edition of the Commercial Service publication *Commercial News USA* to generate new inquiries for his medical equipment.

JQ American now has customers in markets across the Middle East, includ-

ing Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait; the company is currently expanding into Turkey, Egypt, North Africa and Latin America. Exporting is still the company's only line of business and its sales are better than ever.

And the future? Qureshi is considering an International Partner Search, a Commercial Service product that links U.S. suppliers with international partners, agents and distributors. Beyond that, Qureshi plans to continue “working with Rod to increase our sales”—with a solid track record and the help of its partner the U.S. Commercial Service, JQ American is ready for new buyers in new markets. “Any exporting company in the U.S. should work with the Commercial Service,” says Qureshi. ■

