

Doef's employees design, manufacture and install equipment, mainly at cement plants and mines throughout Ontario, although work is also done for more distant markets.

"We might get a call from a cement plant or mine and (they'd) say, 'We want to get ore from here to over there,'" explains Vreugdenhil.

But Doef's also does small jobs.

"We're able to design and install custom-made conveyor equipment. Then we go right down to welding up a crack in a trailer."

A significant amount of their work also comes from local industry and Doef's often acts as a source of skilled labor for the mining and cement companies because it has a contract with the steel workers union in Toronto.

When they receive requests for 15 or 20 workers, they send their own employees. If they're asked to supply 100 steel workers, they call the union and hire the men on a contract basis. Many manufacturing plants use

Doef's skilled labor pool for completing work during plant shut-downs.

One problem Doef's faces is the difficulty in acquiring skilled tradesmen in a time when apprenticeship programs are scarce. That's why he's glad to see the provincial government considering resurrecting them.

Most of the company's work is within a 160 km radius of Belleville but it also receives work from places such as

Sudbury and has completed orders for a mining company in Nova Scotia and a lumber outfit in the former Soviet Union.

When Vreugdenhil began in this business, he says there were 12 shops similar to Doef's between Whitby and Kingston. Today most of those companies have disappeared (Foley's Supply and Machine, Quinsteel in Trenton and Finkle Machine to name a few), but larger companies remain.

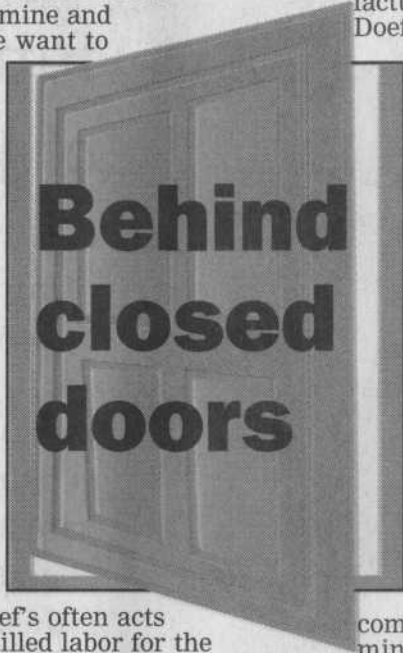
"We're a niche market in that there are very few of us left except the really big (companies).

"There's lots of new competition but all the old guard is gone."

But such competition hasn't held him back. When the company began operating, first year sales were \$45,000. Last year Doef's had \$13 million in sales.

"We've had increasing sales year over year. The last two years we've had record sales."

Asked what he thinks the reason is behind the success, Vreugdenhil says it's "partly because of our design ability and partly because we have an active sales force — and I think we can say we're well respected in the mining and cement industry."



# Behind closed doors

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