

BIZfact

218,000

Long Island jobs in the health care and social assistance sector in May, up 8,300 from May 2015.

Source: New York State Department of Labor

SMALL BUSINESSES STRUGGLING FOR CASH: SURVEY

Small businesses are still struggling to get the money they need and to comply with government regulations, according to a new survey by Babson College.

Company owners who took part in the survey said they've been able to get only about 40 percent of the money they requested from all sources, including loans and investor funding. The nearly 1,900 survey participants sought a median amount of \$100,000, but received only \$40,500. The survey also found that banks are companies' primary source of funding.

Finding money has long been difficult for small businesses, particularly young ones. However, getting loans has been even tougher since the recession because banks are extremely cautious about lending in general.

Businesses that seek funding are most likely to use it to supplement their cash flow or to buy real estate or equipment. Only about 8 percent of the owners said they wanted money so they could hire more staffers — a finding that's in line with other surveys that have shown owners are conservative about expanding their payrolls.

Owners who want to hire continue to have a hard time finding workers with the skills they need. Nearly half the survey participants said job candidates without skills are a challenge. — AP

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Joe Bevilacqua, president of JSB Solutions Inc., displays his product, Retracta-Cade, a crowd-control barrier, inside the Visiontron Corp. warehouse in Hauppauge last week. ■ Video: newsday.com/biz

STEVE POST

At a glance

- **PRODUCT:** Retracta-Cade, a portable, retractable barrier
- **INTRODUCED:** November 2014
- **INVENTOR:** Joe Bevilacqua
- **MANUFACTURER:** Visiontron Corp., Hauppauge
- **UNITS SOLD:** About 1,000

crowd-control companies before reaching out to Visiontron in 2012.

Visiontron vice president Bryan Torsiello said the company, which has been manufacturing other crowd-control products since 1964, liked the concept “and that it had the backing of someone with real-life experience.”

From there, “We took it from concept to reality,” Torsiello said.

A year later, Bevilacqua retired from the NYPD and struck a deal with Visiontron. The barriers launched in November 2014.

The patent-pending Retracta-Cades weigh 37 pounds apiece and expand from 4 feet to 10 feet in less than 30 seconds, Bevilacqua said. They are made from rust-proof anodized aluminum and impact-resistant plastic, designed to withstand heavy use, and can connect using extension locks on each side for a continuous line of barriers.

The Retracta-Cades also have options for changeable signage such as “DWI CHECK-POINT,” rechargeable light kits that double as road flares, and reflective decals.

Experts said that aside from persuading slow-moving bureaucracies to change their minds about products they have become accustomed to, Bevilacqua and Visiontron have another major hurdle: pricing. Retracta-Cades retail for about \$900, although the price drops with a volume purchase. That compares with other barriers that can cost as little as \$100 each.

“What they have to do is demonstrate that the increase in expense is worth the increase of the product — not only that the functionality is better than what’s in the market,” said Bernie Ryba, a business adviser at the Stony Brook Small Business Development Center.

Bevilacqua said that’s just what he’s trying to do.

“I’m trying to get first re-

Building a better BARRICADE

Ex-officer’s portable barrier seen as crowd-control upgrade

BY CARL CORRY
Special to Newsday

For 12 years as a lieutenant in the NYPD’s equipment section, Joe Bevilacqua found he was doing “merry-go-round purchasing” for cheap traffic-control items like flares and cones, which are often ignored by the public and don’t last long. And there were frustrating challenges in dealing with wooden sawhorse barricades or steel bicycle barriers. “Those barriers are difficult

to store, difficult to handle, and they need a lot of manpower to set up and break down,” said Bevilacqua, 45, of Smithtown. The barriers are also stored only in a Queens warehouse, he said, so there could be big delays in getting to scenes.

With all this in mind, in 2009 Bevilacqua came up with an idea that would become the Retracta-Cade, a portable, retractable barrier now on the market through a joint venture with Hauppauge-based Visiontron Corp.

“I said, ‘In this day and age, there should be a product that police officers should have readily available to them for rapid deployment,’” Bevilacqua said.

Now he faces the challenge of persuading law enforcement agencies and other bureaucracies to change the way they do things.

Then four years shy of retirement — he had previously served as a police officer, working transit and investigating shootings — he tinkered with his idea and researched local

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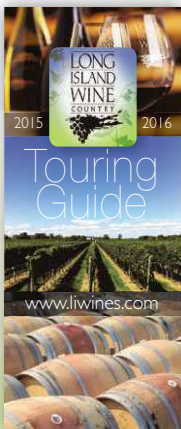
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LI BUSINESS

Ex-officer's barricade upgrade

BARRICADE from A35

sponders out of the mindset of, "Well, I could buy a plastic or a wooden barrier for a couple of hundred dollars," which only last a year to 1½ years, from his experience. "If you buy the Retracta-Cade for \$900, and it lasts 10 years, how many wooden barriers have you gone through in that same amount of time?"

Retracta-Cade clients include the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which bought 500 units, the Suffolk County Office of Emergency Management and the NASA Kennedy Space Center. They are being used in 20 states at colleges, universities, hospitals and police departments, as well as by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

A number of local fire departments also have Retracta-Cades.

"As far as being quick, efficient barricades for the fire service, they are great," said Jim Harrington, ex-fire chief of the North Babylon Fire Department, who reached out to Bevilacqua in 2014 while he was president of the Town of Babylon



Visiontron's John DeBlasio assembles a Retracta-Cade at the firm's warehouse in Hauppauge. Clients include the Department of Homeland Security.

Fire Chiefs. The North Babylon Fire Department has about 10 Retracta-Cades it purchased through a Suffolk County bid.

Bevilacqua envisions Retracta-Cades inside every police patrol car and emergency response unit,

as well as at police precincts and fire departments.

"I feel like the first responders deserve a good product, because I was a first responder myself. When I see them out there, it feels really good."

THRILL RIDE PLAN FLOATED FOR PENN STATION OVERHAUL

The Associated Press

Catching a train at Manhattan's crowded Penn Station is no thrill. But a development team has proposed a novel plan to overhaul the station: Build a 1,200-foot thrill ride on top of it and pay for renovations by charging \$35 a ticket.

The plan submitted to state officials envisions a transparent tower called the Halo with 11 gondolas offering free-fall rides of varying speeds.

"You're experiencing New York City in an unforgettable way," said Alexandros Washburn, president of Brooklyn Capital Partners, the partnership behind the plan. "It's something you will not be able to do anywhere else in the world."

John Gerber, chairman of Brooklyn Capital Partners, said the ride is feasible from an engineering standpoint, but he acknowledged that government agencies and New Yorkers might not embrace the idea.

Other ideas floated for renovating the station have included more traditional concepts, such as building officer towers.

"It's a public process and there are a lot of stakeholders," Gerber said. "Anything that's new is going to be complicated."

Washburn and Gerber submitted their plan after Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo put out a request in January for proposals to renovate the rail hub he called "a blight on the greatest city in the world."

Plans to redo Penn Station, which handles more than 650,000 passengers daily on Amtrak and commuter rail lines, have been stalled for years.

Washburn and Gerber both previously served as president of the Penn Station Redevelopment Corp., a public-private body that oversaw an earlier upgrade.

"We have been there. We know that a new approach is needed," said Washburn, an architect who also has held the job of chief urban designer for New York City.

Washburn said that as "out of the box" as the thrill-ride plan might seem, "It's coming from people who have worked on building New York City for 20 years."

Washburn and Gerber say the

Halo could be situated either on top of Madison Square Garden, the arena that crowns the underground Penn Station, or one block west atop the Farley Post Office building. They say it would generate \$25 million to \$38 million a year in ticket sales.

Washburn said he got the idea from the New York Wheel, the 630-foot Ferris wheel now under construction on Staten Island. "We figured, aha! Take that circle, make it horizontal and elevate it," he said.

A spokesman for Empire State Development, the agency that's reviewing Penn Station proposals, said it can't comment on the proposals until a development team has been chosen.

Washburn admitted that the tower-ride proposal was missing one requirement: a \$15 million bond.

"They wanted a \$15 million bond or line of credit in their hands," he said. "There was a disconnect because they also asked for innovation. We decided that it's worth submitting."