

# Partnerships help Newfoundland companies compete, says Byrne

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## FRANK GALE

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Jerry Byrne firmly believes Newfoundland companies can compete with any other companies in the world and he feels the company he is president of provides that proof.

The company is D.F. Barnes Limited, which manufactures, fabricates, services and repairs a wide variety of products, machinery and equipment in the marine, shipbuilding, offshore and industrial sectors.

Byrne was guest speaker at a conference sponsored by Newfoundland Ocean Industries Association (NOIA) called Business to Business Opportunities in Oil and Gas — a Rural Perspective, held at the Holiday Inn on Tuesday.



He told the success story of D.F. Barnes Limited, a small mom-and-pop St. John's business that, after being incorporated in 1932 as a metal-fabricating business, still only had 10 to 12 people employed in 1987.

Today, the business employs about 50 people in the Gulf of Mexico, about 250 in Alberta and around 200 in Newfoundland. It is also part of the larger DFB Group, which carries a seven-business platform.

"What we have done here with this business don't have to be in St. John's," Byrne said. "It can be done anywhere in the province as we can offer the best value in workmanship and we have everything here, such as a great health system, a great business culture and business ethics – really the best value package that can be offered," Byrne said.

He said the most important thing by far in working in the oil and gas industry is safety and it is really required. He said their company has taken that very seriously and have gone from a company with the worst safety record in the province to one with the best safety record in the country.

"This safety approach is a culture change that we have gone through, which we instill on our workers and even their families," Byrne said. "This is part of our putting people before profits, but we also have a profit-sharing plan with our employees and contribute to their pension plan as well as stay ahead of everybody in the wages we pay."

He said the company has worked hard to be the best company it can be in the country and that is why it hasn't been having any problems getting employees. He added identifying priorities is something that is critical to the business and that sales and marketing is an important part of all the businesses.

Byrne advised those looking on getting into the oil and gas sector to team up with government to mitigate their risks as there are many programs out there to help the private sector succeed.

He said research and development can be expensive, but to get out there and partner with institutes such as Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic who are there to help.

“It’s all about establishing relationships and having good communications for shareholders, customers, employees and their families, financial institutions, vendors, government and the community,” Byrne said.

He said the DFB Group will hit \$100 million in sales next year and the future beyond that is even brighter as it continually expands into different types of work.

“It can be done here, but you have to be willing to do the things that were said here today,” he told the delegates in attendance.

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