

# The Herald Business Journal



Electric Mirror Photo

Jim Mischel introduces new Electric Mirror products at the Hospitality Design trade show in Las Vegas.

## A computer in your mirror? Electric Mirror® sees sales rise on hot demand.

**STEVE WILHELM**

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Behind the reflection of mirrors, all kinds of technology can be hidden.

This is the basic premise of Electric Mirror LLC, an Everett company that has been riding demand for its high-technology mirrors to sales growth expected to be 40 percent to 50 percent this year, after 50 percent growth last year.

“Ultimately our company is kind of a fusion of fashion and technology,” said CEO Jim Mischel. “Imagine the traditional mirror used in every home around the world practically, and combine that with technology.”

Started by Mischel and his father, the firm's first product was a mirror with built-in defogging. This has been gradually followed by mirrors with embedded flat-screen televisions, with computers, with Bluetooth music connections and with flat speakers.

The biggest market is relatively high-end hotels, where the hotel wants to give customers an unusual experience, and where it's not a bad idea to be able to hide televisions behind a mirrored expanse.

You wouldn't even know a television was there until you turn it on. In the bathroom, the mirrors include touch controls that allow a user to control lighting level and music volume, just by touching the mirror's surface.

"We created these product categories; they really didn't exist before," Mischel said.

The company protects its creations with more than 36 patents, with another 30 pending. Mischel, who formerly worked as a patent attorney, said he's constantly fighting off would-be technology thieves, but he adds that the company's biggest defense is constant innovation.

"We have a major quality advantage, and we're always innovating," he said. "I think that's the trick with countries that specialize in knocking off products, is to stay ahead of the innovation curve, and we really drive those forward."

Currently about 70 percent of sales are to the hospitality industry; 15 percent are commercial and 15 percent residential.

About 30 percent of the products are exported, and the company has opened offices in London, Dubai and Hong Kong, Mischel said. But all of the products come from Everett.

"We're pretty strong believers in U.S. manufacturing, and 90 percent of all our products are built in the U.S. and our factory right here in Everett," he said.

Packed into 55,000 square feet, the company is running three shifts and now employs 260, Mischel said.

In the last year, Electric Mirror added 100 people, but Mischel said this year they're focusing on increasing productivity with the people they have.

The work force includes about 25 engineers, and they're always spinning possibilities for new products, Mischel said.

"We're always in the idea mode here," he said, adding that he plans to expand to a bigger site of about 100,000 square feet, probably in the Everett area, in the next two years.