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Bob Shallit: Local firm drawn to Nevada, Colorado

By [Bob Shallit](#) -- Bee Staff Writer
 Published 2:15 a.m. PST Monday, November 10, 2003

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Lots of companies have been scared off by California's business climate. Now add to the list a homegrown startup.

Cottonwood Manufacturing, based in Roseville, considered several local sites for its first plant, which will be making a new kind of cellulose insulation that resists fire and inhibits mold. But it eventually opted to build in Colorado. A second plant will go in Las Vegas.

Cottonwood founder **Stuart Douglas** says he was concerned about workers' comp and other cost issues in California. Another factor was a great opportunity

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in Colorado: The company will be making insulation for most of the homes going into a huge subdivision at the former Stapleton Airport site in Denver. Cottonwood's borate-based product -- called SoftCell -- is appealing because it's priced comparably to Fiberglas insulation but doesn't pose the same health concerns.

"If you work with Fiberglas all day, you end up with rashes all over your body," says Cottonwood spokeswoman **Maureen Murray**. Builders are thrilled to have an alternative that's safe for workers -- and cost effective.

The Colorado plant will be in operation in 30 days, initially producing loose-fill insulation that's blown into walls and attics, then "batts" that are rolled into place. Plans are to open the Las Vegas plant next year. What about Sacramento? The company would like to have a facility here, too, Murray says, if the state's business costs drop.

Joe Millionaire: Football great **Joe Montana** is in town this week. But not to sign autographs or tell gridiron war stories.

He's here as part of a "wealth summit" sponsored by money manager **Legacy Capital** of Roseville and the **Downey Brand** law firm. The by-invitation-only gathering will feature talks on the mutual fund trading abuse scandal, changes in laws governing trusts and the growing popularity of the CSFB Holt stock evaluation system.

With speakers from **Credit Suisse First Boston** and others, the event shows Sacramento is "coming of age" as a place where people can make lots of money

and get the best possible advice on keeping it, says **Joe Milam**, Legacy's founder.

So what's Montana have to do with it? He's the celebrity draw, Milam acknowledges, but also someone who fits right into a conference on wealth creation and management.

The former 49er is one of the principals in **Champion Ventures**, a "fund of funds" that invests in an assortment of venture capital funds. After a shaky start -- it was formed right before the tech crash -- Champion is getting respectable returns.

Milam says he's impressed with Montana's business acumen. He's "rolled up his sleeves" and become just as adept at picking investments as he was at picking apart defenses.

Getting to know you: Local chamber members have an interesting city in

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mind for their next annual Study Mission: Sacramento. In recent years, members have trekked to Seattle, Austin, Denver and Atlanta. Last month they spent a week in Portland, Ore. Meeting with their counterparts. Figuring what development strategies went right there. What went wrong.

And while there, says trip organizer **Dave Butler**, "a lot of buzz" developed over the idea of convening next year's mission right here in River City.

"We've learned about all these other places," Butler says, "but people don't know other parts of this region as well as they should."

Considering how difficult it's been to develop regional cooperation here, the idea makes a lot of sense. It's also got this going for it: It will be a cheap trip.

Right place, right time: Speaking of the chamber's Portland trip, participants found themselves doing a little unexpected cheerleading. As the delegation of 80 or so biz bigwigs waited at the PDX airport to board a Southwest flight home, a plane arrived at their gate.

And out of it walked the Sac State football team, in town to play Portland State. Sacramento boosters to the core, the study mission delegates broke out in applause and started cheering "Go, Hornets." Chamber CEO **Matt Mahood** says the players and coaches were a bit confused at first, then caught on. "They thought it was pretty cool," Mahood says.

About the Writer

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