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New space will help Hawaii's Accel Events & Tents grow its business

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Accel Events & Tents has leased two warehouses in Honolulu totaling 37,000 square feet as it gears up for the return of events in Hawaii with a new president, a new brand and a new logo.

Accel, previously known as Accel Event Rentals, changed the name as part of a rebrand after acquiring Hawaii Tents & Events last year. Former hospitality executive [Gabrielle Richter](#) joined the company — founded in 1994 [and acquired by Hawaii private equity firm Koa Capital Partners](#) in 2017 — as president in February.

When the Covid-19 pandemic shut down in-person events in Hawaii, the company had to lay off 148 employees and idle its casual workforce, Richter said. The company's business over the last year has included providing tents for schools and vaccination sites, and is heating up as more business is booked for the fall and into 2022. Accel is up to about 40 people now and Richter actively



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Gabrielle Richter, president of Accel Events & Tents, stands in front of a logo-wrapped truck at the company's new warehouse space in Honolulu.

recruiting and looking to add 30 people by September as part of the company's growth plans.

Accel had leased an 18,000-square-foot warehouse on Kaumualii Street, just off Waiakamilo Road, formerly occupied by Goodwill, just before the Covid-19 pandemic. The company moved from an industrial space in Halawa of about 5,300 square feet to a temporary space in Kalihi while renovations to the Kaumualii space are done.

Then the 19,000-square-foot warehouse next door became available. The warehouse — the former Golden Cabinets showroom most recently used by Hawaii Moving Services — includes a large yard of nearly 20,000 square feet between the two properties that completes the 1.2-acre property.

Nick Adler of CBRE represented the landlord, Kamehameha Schools, in the transaction, but Richter said Adler also helped her to navigate the process.

"It's not like we were out shopping — it was going to be the property next door, or we were going to table these aspirations and figure out how to max out our one warehouse until the future," she said. "This is worked out like a dream, being able to expand now to move forward."

Richter said the company will now renovate the spaces to unify them and position the company for growth. Accel provides everything for events, including tents, chairs, tables, stages, lighting, linens, dishware, utensils and glassware.

"Your warehouse is the mindset," she said. "It's important for us to have large, clean, well-operated, well-organized warehouses so that we can structure, that we can organize, we can get to the field with the right products that are well taken care of, that we take the time to prep and process whether it's a tent or whether it's equipment ... so that we get the best products to field for our customers.

"I'd like to expand our dishware line, have more flexibility for planners, more options," she said. "I'd like to offer a more functional variety to the client ... we want to expand our lounge furniture, we want to expand our lighting, and in the future ... we

want to expand into some areas that we typically haven't dipped our toes into."

Richter acknowledges that having the backing of parent Koa Capital has helped Accel, especially during the pandemic. The company acquired two Maui event rental companies, Island Rents Maui and Paradise Event Rentals, in 2018, as well as Hawaii Events & Tents on Oahu.

"That really grew our inventory, specifically on the tenting side here on Oahu," Richter said. "Tenting takes a lot of storage [and] it was important that we were able to actually create the space to do that properly, which was part of the impetus for this move."

Richter's goal is to create a space that "reflects the vibrancy of what we do, events that we service." She's looking to add colorful murals to the exterior wall that's visible from Waikamilo Road, and wants to paint the interiors with bright, bold colors to create an inviting work space.

"I don't have a Google budget but I want to create a space that's really special for our crew, in addition to our clients," she said. "We're going to have the first showroom that we've ever had before ... an open space for our clients and the community to come in and check out some of the products that we have available."

She's also planning to add private meeting rooms where meeting and event planners and wedding planners can meet with their clients and show them linen or dishware samples.

"We'll have a cute little coffee bar and we want people to feel really comfortable working and being in our environment," Richter said. "We're excited, it models what I think a lot of the rental companies are doing on the Mainland. To have that showroom experience and have an open workspace for people who are in our industry I think is really important."

Janis L. Magin
Senior Editor
Pacific Business News

