

Analysis from FORTUNE: Plugged In

## Layoffs? Not if we can help it

How Cox Enterprises closed a plant and saved 400 jobs.

By [Marc Gunther](#), Fortune senior writer

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(Excerpt)

NEW YORK (Fortune) -- Here's an advertisement that is not often seen in the classifieds:

**Wanted:** New employer for 300-plus experienced workers. Production facility included. If your company has a need to expand operations in the near future, we have the perfect opportunity for you.

Cox Target Media, a division of privately held media giant Cox Enterprises, took out that ad after the company decided to close a factory in Elm City, North Carolina. "We want to preserve the jobs for our North Carolina employees," the ad went on to say, "and we're willing to be creative to make this happen."

...When Cox decided to close down the Elm City plant in 2004, it employed about 440 people there. Most were not going to move to Florida; in any event, there wouldn't be jobs for all of them because the new automated plant needs fewer workers.

So Disbrow assigned a vice president to find a buyer for the Elm City plant. Cox took out ads, sent out sales brochures to about 200 firms and spread the word through the [Winterberry Group](#), [a consulting firm](#), and [Petsky Prunier](#), an investment bank that specializes in direct marketing.

The consultants found IWCO Direct, a direct mail company based in Chanhassen, Minnesota. It looked at first like the two firms might be out of sync. "They needed the plant earlier than we wanted to get rid of it," Disbrow said. But earlier this year, they reached an agreement.

Elm City's workers will remain employed by Cox until next fall when most will go to work for IWCO Direct. None are guaranteed jobs, but both companies say their skills are a big reason why IWCO made the deal. IWCO says it will invest \$18.9 million in the plant, and add another 100 jobs. The buyer is getting about \$750,000 in state and county aid...