

Calico Laboratories

Festus, Missouri

It all began in 1979 with a sponge and an idea. That's the year Ron Elderton and his business partner developed Pretty Nails—the first sponge-type nail polish remover. Pretty Nails would go on to become an industry standard.



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The business steadily evolved, but after eight years, Ron and his partner chose to go separate ways. His partner maintained the Pretty Nails brand and Ron started the Polish-Off line of fingernail care items, which he marketed throughout the country.

In 1998, Ron moved his cosmetics and toiletries manufacturing operation, Calico Laboratories, from California to Missouri for the state's more favorable business climate. Starting with a small plant in Festus, Calico Laboratories has continued to grow and now occupies much larger plant facilities.

Ron was introduced to RMI and the 504 Loan Program by Jim Weiss, vice president of Commerce Bank in Kirkwood, Mo. With RMI's assistance, Ron was able to buy back the Pretty Nails brand he had originally founded, and expand his operation by adding a blow-molding facility.

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Today, Calico Laboratories continues to grow. Polish-Off and Pretty Nails are sold in nearly every retail store in the country, and Calico produces private-label brands for Cutex, Sally Hansen, Rite-Aid and others. Pretty Nails Instant Nail Polish Remover is the No. 1 instant nail polish remover in the world, and Calico products gain a larger share of the market every day.



Ron Elderton