



2005
Wisconsin

MANUFACTURERS
OF THE YEAR

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GRAND AWARD WINNERS

Mercury Marine, Fond du Lac
MEGA SIZE CATEGORY

Ariens Company, Brillion
LARGE SIZE CATEGORY

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MEDIUM SIZE CATEGORY

Tailored Label Products, Inc., Menomonee Falls
SMALL SIZE CATEGORY

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COMMUNITY COMMITMENT CATEGORY

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Wendy Baumann

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Dan Clancy

WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

John Emory, Jr.

EMORY BUSINESS ADVISORS, LLC

Michael Falk

WISCONSIN ALUMNI RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Curt Haga

LADISH CO., INC.

Scott Klug

TRAILS MEDIA/CORPORATE REPORT WISCONSIN

Brian Kuhnau

SCHOENECK CONTAINERS

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Feroze Motafram

CARDIAC SCIENCE CORP.

Mary Regel

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Bert Restyanszki

GE MEDICAL SYSTEMS - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Rich Rovito

MILWAUKEE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Steve Royko

RHS COMPANIES, INC.

Frank Schmidt

MORTATA INSTRUMENT

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Mike Spude

ISTHMUS GROUP

Tom Still

WISCONSIN TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

Brett Stone

ASSOCIATED BANK

Dr. Hermann Viets

MILWAUKEE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

Patti Wallner

WAUKESHA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE ANNUAL WISCONSIN
MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR AWARDS, PLEASE CONTACT
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2005 *Grand Award Winners*

Mercury Marine

FOND DU LAC

MEGA COMPANY GRAND AWARD

Since its modest start, Mercury Marine has grown and developed into a world-class manufacturer and a major employer.

The company has 7,000 employees around the globe, with more than 3,500 working in Mercury Marine's 19 plants. Though the company now has a presence on five continents and in more than 25 countries, its home state of Wisconsin remains the seat of power and its principal manufacturing site.

Mercury Marine is the world leader in recreational marine propulsion. It manufactures and sells marine propulsion products from the steering wheel and gauges to the propeller nut, but is perhaps best known for its industry-leading marine engines. It is the only marine manufacturer to offer all major categories of propulsion, including gasoline and multi-fuel outboards, gasoline and diesel sterndrive and inboard engines, electric trolling motors, and outboard and sterndrive high-performance engines.

The Mercury Marine headquarters office has been located in Fond du Lac since 1946. The community is also home to the main outboard assembly plant, research and development offices and laboratories, distribution facilities, Mercury Racing high-performance product development and manufacturing, and extensive multi-faceted castings operations.

Each year, the company spends \$30 million to maintain and upgrade its Wisconsin facilities and processes. Within the last five years, it has spent more than \$50 million for a new state-of-the-art production line for its flagship line of Verado outboard propulsion systems, \$11 million on advanced aluminum castings capabilities, and \$4 million on an industry leading indoor engine test center.

The additions to the foundry have made Mercury Marine a world-class aluminum casting supplier that lists Harley-Davidson, Boeing and Magneti Marelli among its customers.

In 2004, Mercury Marine introduced Verado, the world's only production marine engine featuring a supercharger. This engine now boasts seven models, and has become the standard in state-of-the-art marine technology.

All of Mercury Marine's facilities are ISO 9001:2000 certified. This disciplined approach to manufacturing helps ensure quality by fostering consistency between every part, every worker and every shift. Mercury achieved ISO registration in early 2004 and it remains the only marine engine manufacturer in the world to be 100% ISO certified.

The company also employs the tools of Lean Six Sigma to continuously drive toward improved quality and the elimination of waste. Other concepts are also driving excellence at Mercury. The Quality, Cost & Timing method coupled with a stage gate Product and Cycle-Time Excellence program is helping Mercury prioritize its product projects and allocating its engineering resources accordingly.

In October 2005, the company's main outboard manufacturing facility, celebrated two million hours worked without a lost-time incident – a rare achievement in the world of manufacturing.

Mercury measures its customer satisfaction continuously by way of a Customer Satisfaction Index program, and annually via the JD Power and Associates Initial Quality Study for marine products. It also closely monitors the warranty rates on every product to identify opportunities for improvement.

The company is employing Voice of the Customer techniques in the development of new products and the modification of existing products. The data is collected and analyzed to determine what customers want from a product, and begins the development of products that will satisfy that need.

Mercury employs a staff of more than 300 engineering-related employees. In the last five years, the company has filed close to 250 patents. In addition, the company won the 2005 Innovation Award in the OEM Electronics Division at the International Boatbuilders Exhibition and Conference in 2005.

Mercury Marine annually contributes over \$500,000 to support local agencies and organizations that are engaged in the improvement of the quality of life in the community. The company joined with two Brunswick sister boat companies to ship more than \$250,000 in boats and engines to support rescue efforts in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

Mercury posted record sales in 2004. About half of the outboard engines produced in Fond du Lac are shipped to its international customers.

Approximately one-third of Mercury Marine's total revenues are derived from international business, making the company a substantial exporter of Wisconsin-built products. Compounding the benefit is the fact that Mercury Marine annually purchases more than \$200 million in production and other goods and services from more than 1,500 Wisconsin companies.

Ariens Company

BRILLION

LARGE COMPANY GRAND AWARD

Established in 1933 in Brillion, Ariens Company is a leading manufacturer of outdoor power equipment for both consumer and commercial use. The fourth-generation, family-operated company continues to build on a long history of manufacturing premium quality products.

The company's brands include Ariens Sno-Thro® and Ariens zero-turn mowers for consumers, and Gravely® commercial lawn equipment for professional landscape contractors. Ariens' affiliate, Stens Corporation, supplies replacement parts to the outdoor power equipment industry.

Ariens Company operates three factories in Calumet County, employing more than 1,000 people. Almost 50% of its employees have worked for the company for more than 10 years.

This industry innovator has tackled the challenges of international competition head-on, by continually improving and embracing cutting-edge manufacturing advances, shifting production lines, and introducing new products and financial initiatives to employers and customers.

As a result, Ariens has experienced unprecedented financial success.

While the outdoor power equipment industry is facing tough competition from China, Ariens is fighting to stay on the cutting-edge and reduce costs to stay ahead of its competitors. Ariens has successfully implemented lean manufacturing processes, and, in 2005, rallied with a 14.7% increase in productivity.

In 2005, Ariens introduced many first-of-its-kind initiatives including a stocking program that reduces the risk for outdoor power equipment dealers, wealth building programs for business partners, and a national account program that allows greater efficiency for contractors.

While the industry struggled in 2005, Ariens posted record sales and inventory turns increased 13.3%. And the company celebrated the manufacture of its two-millionth Sno-Thro®. The company also successfully shifted production from tractors to zero-turn machines to meet the growing consumer demand.

Ariens attributes its success to the realignment of its departments into value streams, its efforts to drive lean thinking and continuous improvement throughout the company, enhancing its sales force to improve customer relations and growth, and continuing to improve its dealer base.

Today, the company has taken a leadership role in sharing solutions with the outdoor power equipment industry supply chain.

In an ongoing effort to improve production efficiency, Ariens Company is making a \$6.5 million capital investment aimed at reducing delivery lead times for the company's walk-behind power equipment products, including Sno-Thro® machines.

This investment will allow Ariens to take on the challenges of worldwide sources of supply and continue to provide consumers and commercial landscape contractors with a truly American-built product.

Additional plant upgrades will include the creation of a new state-of-the-art production and engineering training facility. The training center will provide each of its plants with independent learning centers.

Its dedication to premium quality means that product life span for Ariens equipment is measured in generations. With its commitment to quality and its employees, Ariens is guaranteed a bright future.

Magnum Products, LLC

BERLIN

MEDIUM COMPANY GRAND AWARD

Tom Joseph pursued the American dream in 1988 when he founded Magnum Products in his garage. His first product was a light tower that when attached to a generator and mounted on a small trailer, becomes mobile and self-powering.

Today, Magnum Products, LLC, is an industry leader that operates out of a 50,000 square foot facility and employs 250 workers. The company manufactures mobile light towers, mobile generators, and mobile water trailers.

Since 2003, the number of employees has grown from 75 to 2005 and its sales have more than tripled.

Magnum builds mobile flood light towers for equipment rental dealers, government agencies, contract sales channels, and international and private label contract houses. The products are designed for ease in transport, set-up, operation, support and service. The products are reliable and durable and offer competitive warranties. All of its products are built to withstand the most difficult conditions and toughest environments. Its light towers are time-tested and perform globally in the world's most extreme environmental conditions.

In 2001, Magnum took a leap of faith and cancelled its contract with a private label OEM, which constituted 65% of its business. The company determined that the best opportunity for growth was to operate its own sales force and market products under its own name. The gamble paid off – Magnum Products has experienced explosive sales growth over the last four years.

Magnum delivers through customer service. If a customer has a specific need that accompanies any item in its product line, Magnum's employees are committed to finding a way to do it, and do it well.

When it appeared the U.S. might go to war with Iraq, Magnum took a calculated risk and purchased a six-month supply of engines from its largest engine supplier realizing that if demand for light towers spiked, it would be one step ahead of its competition. Magnum was well positioned – when its competitors ran out of engines within the month, Magnum became the light tower of choice.

When the U.S. Marines approached Magnum to make enhancements to a generator, the company's research and development, and engineering departments got the job done. It has also designed light towers for oil fields in Alaska to operate in extreme cold, and designed and custom-built generators for NASA's space shuttle program.

The company has a low employee turnover rate. It attributes this success to its focus on training and mentoring, health care and well-being and a bonus compensation plan.

Magnum is committed to providing its employees with access to internal and external training opportunities.

When the company realized the high cost of health insurance made access to health care prohibitive for the majority of its production staff, it took measures to offer its employees affordable health care. It revamped its health plan into a self-insured plan that could be offered at a nominal cost. Within one year of changing the health plan, 90% of the eligible employees were covered under a health plan, and the costs to the company were reduced by 20%.

Magnum values each and every employee. The company has instituted a bonus plan that rewards its employees equally.

As important as it is to provide superior customer service to its customers and to care for its employees, Magnum Product believes it is equally important to be a good citizen of its community. As the success of Magnum Products continues, it is committed to the community that has contributed to its success.

Tailored Label Products, Inc.,

MENOMONEE FALLS

SMALL COMPANY GRAND AWARD

For over two decades, Tailored Label Products (TLP) has carved out a niche as an innovative manufacturer of custom engineered labeling for demanding and diverse industries.

TLP has earned itself a reputation as troubleshooter and problem solver. It has taken on the most challenging product identification

programs and engineered solutions with innovations as unique as the challenges it addresses.

TLP manufactures custom engineered labeling and precision die cut polymer solutions for industries as diverse as outdoor power equipment, biomedical equipment and medical devices, electronics, appliances, motors, and hundreds of unique applications. Its in-house capabilities include adhesive development for special applications, converting, pre-press, printing, and die-cutting.

When customers bring TLP a challenge, the company responds with a solution precisely tailored to fit their needs. The company works toward an optimal solution – integrating technology, practicality, and maximum value.

TLP operates in a modern and purpose built plant in Menomonee Falls. It has invested in the latest technology and has co-developed some of the machinery used to produce its ever growing family of printed components.

As an ISO-9001 2000 registered company, TLP consistently delivers unmatched precision as a tier two supplier to major automotive companies and Wisconsin manufacturers.

Capital investment over the last two years accounts for over 35% of the company's total assets, fueling 20% year over year growth since 2003 in a market environment where the general printing industry has seen low single digit growth at best.

The company recently conducted a value stream mapping project to identify methods to minimize material waste and identify specific problem areas. The success of this initiative saved the company enough money to invest \$280,000 in new printing and packaging technology which will pay for itself in three years. The LEAN project not only allowed the company to fund the investment, it has also resulted in competitively winning twice the normal annual volume from this production cell. In addition, the company has created four new positions in 2005 and will add two more positions in 2006.

TLP has a solid reputation for production excellence. The company's success includes quick turnaround delivery reliability, completing 97% of its orders in less than 10 days, and inventory turns ranging between 14 and 18 and three key quality measurements running 96-100%.

Support from world-class suppliers has allowed TLP to grow its solutions across a national and international client base.

Driving a 50% increase in employment since 2003 is a reputation for taking on the most challenging product identification programs with confidence and craftsmanship through a diverse and talented workforce. TLP has invested in extensive employee training, including tuition refund programs for students in the graphics and printing technology programs at Waukesha County Technical College, as well as other specialized training programs.

TLP reported its best revenue year in 2005, resulting in a record level payout through its company-wide employee performance reward system.

TLP started the year with a strong focus on innovation and investment and translated that into opportunity – growing its workforce, customer base and profits.

Briggs & Stratton Corporation,

MILWAUKEE

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT GRAND AWARD

Briggs & Stratton has been a community partner for close to 100 years.

From philanthropic partnerships to the participation of its workforce in charitable giving, its corporate culture has evolved over time and solidified its role in Milwaukee and other Wisconsin communities.

Briggs & Stratton helps cultivate a more vibrant climate and culture, better prepare and educate a workforce, and provide greater opportunities for people to realize their dreams.

Briggs & Stratton is the world's largest manufacturer of small, air-cooled engines for lawn and garden, and other outdoor power equipment. Additionally, through its wholly owned subsidiary, Briggs & Stratton Power Products Group, LLC, Briggs & Stratton is a leading designer, manufacturer, and marketer of portable generators, pressure washers, and related accessories. And, through its Simplicity Manufacturing, it produces lawn and garden, and turf care products. Its products are designed, manufactured, and serviced in over 100 countries and seven continents.

While the company is committed to offering its customers the most powerful and reliable engines in the business, over the last 15 years, Briggs & Stratton has made great strides to continuously develop cleaner gasoline engines that meet or exceed environmental standards. The company has also made great strides in reducing its environmental impact on communities worldwide.

When the power of giving is combined with the power of work, great things can happen.

Evidence of this is seen in its partnership with Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin. For ten years, Briggs & Stratton has collaborated with Goodwill's Customized Labor Solutions program and AbillTy Connection program. These programs provide job training and experience for individuals who are disabled or have barriers to employment. Up to 80 people at the Goodwill headquarters work on Briggs & Stratton materials and package the items at a rate of four million units per year. The AbillTy Connection program helps disabled students seeking a degree in information technology find a job.

The company and its employees contribute time, talent and treasure to support the community.

Over the past nine years, Briggs & Stratton has proudly been the title sponsor for Briggs & Al's Run and Walk for Children's Hospital. Now in its 28th year, the event has raised over \$7 million for the neonatal and prenatal intensive care units and Children's Hospital. Some 600 company employees and their families participated in the 2005 event.

Many Briggs & Stratton employees invest in the community through the Power of Giving program. Through this web-based charitable giving program, employees can contribute funds to worthy causes of their choice.

Since 1999 Briggs & Stratton has participated in the annual fundraising spelling bee for Literary Services of Wisconsin. The event brings in over \$30,000 a year to help provide basic adult education for functionally illiterate adults in Wisconsin.

Briggs & Stratton recently celebrated the second anniversary of its "Briggs for Bigs" partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. In conjunction with the Milwaukee Bucks' "Buck Buddies" program, the company provided 400 tickets so participants could enjoy an evening watching the Bucks play.

For the past 25 years, the company has been a proud underwriter for the Channel 10/36 Friends Auction, which helps the local PBS affiliates purchase quality educational programming and maintain equipment.

The company also helps support the Junior Achievement program and some 24 employees volunteer to visit local schools and teach lessons focusing on business, citizenship, economics, entrepreneurship, ethics/character, financial literacy and career development. And, Briggs & Stratton helps Milwaukee Public School students realize their dreams and further their education through its Higher Horizons college scholarship program.

For the last nine years, Briggs & Stratton has also served as a major sponsor of Milwaukee's Summerfest music festival with the Briggs & Stratton Big Backyard music stage. It has also been a proud sponsor of the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and the Milwaukee County Zoo.

The Briggs & Stratton Corporate Foundation contributes millions of dollars annually to numerous worthy programs and organizations in the community.

Briggs & Stratton is clearly a role model for manufacturers when it comes to community commitment, and a reminder of why Wisconsin must cultivate a vibrant manufacturing base that supports our communities.

WS Packaging Group, Inc.

ALGOMA

HIGH-TECH GRAND AWARD

WS Packaging Group, Inc. is one of the largest printing and label converting operations in the United States.

A privately-owned company, WS Packaging has been producing high-quality packaging products for more than 35 years.

Headquartered in Algoma, WS Packaging has built its success on its ability to produce high-quality products, provide top-notch service, and continuously introduce new and innovative products to the packaging industry. Its customers range in size from small businesses to large high-volume manufacturers, doing business locally, nationally, and worldwide.

WS Packaging is dedicated to keeping printing and packaging on the cutting-edge of technology. As a result, its market share has doubled due to strong growth, expansion, and leadership that have kept up with new technology and market development.

It operates facilities across the U.S., giving it the flexibility to quickly respond to the needs of its customers.

From labels to folded cartons, coupons to application equipment, no job is too big or too small for WS Packaging. The company assigns each customer a dedicated service team of sales, customer service, and production personnel to guarantee a quality product that is delivered accurately and on-time.

The company offers full service in-house art departments for design and prepress, and in-house research and development teams for innovation and creative product constructions. With over 150 presses, WS Packaging has an extensive line of equipment to meet the needs of its customers.

WS Packaging has dedicated resources to the development of a unique online customer portal, known as WebFlex™. WebFlex™ in an interactive business-to-business on-line service that enables its customers to interact with WS Packaging and manage their printing and labeling data. The online product and asset management system gives customers the ability to go online and place orders, check order status, upload art files, check inventory, view proofs, track shipments and run reports.

The online tool is used by customers to verify their own production standards, act as a quality assurance tool, and manage upcoming promotions and product launches. It allows customers to manage their art from the time of upload, through the proofing stage and production. Customers have the ability to review art files, request changes, and proof the product. And, if an item is ever discontinued or replaced, the online system will track its lifecycle and history. This is all done in real time with the click of a mouse. From the marketing department to the legal office, from customer to the supplier, all parties can stay on top of the status of a project.

To stay ahead of the competition, WS Packaging is focusing on Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology –the wave of the future for warehousing, inventory, tracking, identification, and ordering for almost any product developed in the world. RFID technology is implemented into tags via a programmable chip and an antenna and can be programmed with information specific to the product to which they are attached.

WS Packaging is at the forefront in the development of systems and products to make the transition into the next phase of product identification as easy and inexpensive as possible.

WS Packaging can offer custom-built label inserters, label applicator equipment, and RFID labels in both roll-stock and fanfold formats as well as readers, verifiers, writers, and print and apply units. It has engineers and technical support experts who have designed the RFID equipment, label construction, test criteria, and developed RFID solutions and consumer packages. WS Packaging has the highest speed applicators on the market, expertise in handling tags to minimize damage, and methods for tag insertion which is much faster than equipment used by its competitors.

WS Packaging is committed to sound social and environmental management, and has made great strides to reduce volatile organic compounds and hazardous waste by making substantial investments in technology.

The company installed a computerized ink management system that keeps records of the amount of ink used by each press and the amount of volatile organic compounds emitted. Working with its suppliers, WS Packaging helped to develop inks and coatings that were not solvent-based, but would still meet customer requirements.

The company has also implemented a process that eliminated the need to use solvents to clean its printing plates. As a result, the company reduced VOC emissions by 51%.

2005 *Special* Award Winners

The following Manufacturer of the Year special awards recognize Wisconsin companies making considerable contributions in specific areas of manufacturing.

Kraft Pizza Company

LITTLE CHUTE

“EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT”

Jack Eldrich put the village of Little Chute on the map in the mid-1960’s when he founded the original Jack’s Frozen Pizza Inc. making fresh pizzas in his garage. Forty years later, Jack’s Pizza is a cornerstone of a 379,000 square foot facility to some of the world’s best-known brands.

In 1992, Kraft took Jack’s Frozen Pizza to a whole new level. Built on more than a century of quality and innovation, Kraft is the largest branded food and beverage company in North America and the second largest in the world and has made Little Chute the pizza-making capital of the world.

Through the years, the employees of Kraft-Little Chute have built strong ties with the surrounding communities, and both community and facility have benefited from each other.

Today, the Kraft Pizza Division manufactures Tombstone, DiGiorno, Jack’s Pizza, and DELISSIO pizza. The DiGiorno Rising Crust pizza established a unique and successful new niche in the home pizza market, with rising crust technology competing with rivaling pizza carryout and delivery options. DiGiorno was the first to market a premium cheese stuffed crust frozen pizza.

In the last seven years, the Little Chute facility has become Kraft Foods largest frozen pizza provider. To keep up with the high demand for frozen pizza, this facility has adapted to the constant changes in technology. The plant can produce more than 650,000 pizzas in a 24-hour period.

Kraft Pizza Company in Little Chute has more than 700 employees and operates four production and six bakery lines. Its economic impact on the state is substantial. The company purchases more than \$100 million in goods and services in Wisconsin.

The employees of Kraft Pizza Company demonstrate incredible involvement both in making the company successful and in making the community healthy. The company made great strides in 2005 – shattering safety records, contributing to the community, and achieving manufacturing milestones.

In 2005, the Little Chute plant accomplished something that few companies have realized – its employees worked six million hours

without a lost time incident. The Little Chute facility was awarded the Kraft Safety Excellence Award for the last four years straight, making it the only Kraft facility worldwide to achieve the honor for four consecutive years.

Kraft Pizza Company has been a strong pillar in Little Chute and the Fox Cities. Whether its running in the local marathon, sponsoring local charity benefits, funding local programs or extending a hand to help victims of nationwide disasters, Kraft-Little Chute is a leader.

The Little Chute facility, through the Kraft Corporate Contributions Program, contributes to nonprofit organizations in the community focusing its donations on hunger and nutrition, healthy lifestyles, and access to the arts.

For the last four years, Little Chute employees have actively participated in Junior Achievement – teaching local elementary school children about business concepts.

Company employees have also been active in the Neenah Elementary School’s literacy program, the Hmong American Organization, YMCA Youth Nights, Kimberly Fest, and the EAA.

It has also helped fund the Native American Experience, an educational exhibit that provides a deeper understanding of the community’s Native American heritage, and the *All Things Wisconsin* CD project, a children’s CD that features Wisconsin musicians and artists. It also helped fund the Appleton Art Center, Adopt-a-Classroom, Fox Valley Symphony, and Very Special Arts.

The facility also partnered with area businesses to ship products to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The company’s Community Involvement Team helps support the Ronald McDonald House, the Fox Valley Humane Society, Multiple Sclerosis, Juvenile Diabetes, and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Kraft employees also helped start a school supply drive to assist under-privileged children at Columbus School and a book drive for Little Chute Elementary School.

The company recognizes its responsibility as a large manufacturer in a small residential community to provide a safe environment for its employees and ensure its processes are environmentally safe for neighbors and the land. Kraft works closely with community leaders on an ongoing basis to promote awareness of facility processes, resources and expected changes that may impact the community.

Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry Company, Inc.

MANITOWOC

“OVERCOMING OBSTACLES”

Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry (WAF) was established in Manitowoc in 1909 as a manufacturer of non-ferrous castings. Today, the company employs more than 400

workers and is a leading producer of non-ferrous castings, pressure cookers and griddles.

As an ISO 9002 and QS9000 certified manufacturer, the company produces castings for a wide variety of industries including manufacturers of commercial engines, generators, diesel and marine engines, and farm, construction and paper-making machinery.

WAF stands out from its competition with its ability take a casting design project from prototype sampling to production in a time frame that helps keep its customers ahead of its competition.

In the 1990s the company was riding the wave of economic growth. But, in the late 1990s and early 2000, a series of events tested the company, and the inner strength and abilities of its management team.

In recent years, WAF suffered a fire at its plant, an economic slowdown, the loss of two senior executives and increased competition from overseas manufacturers.

In late 2000, a fire at its facility resulted in \$1.2 million in damages. WAF employees responded to this challenge in rapid response by replacing equipment with rentals, outsourcing destroyed production processes, and working with local contractors. As a result, the company was able to resume production three days later.

Then the economic downturn forced the company to reevaluate its business operations. WAF did not have in place the necessary controls to react to the slowing economy and as a result experienced an unprofitable year in 2001. And, tragically, the company president died unexpectedly that same year.

WAF responded by reorganizing its management team and redefining the responsibilities of each member. Together the new management team was able to incorporate performance measurement into the daily, short-term, and long-term decision making processes. Due to their input and guidance, the management team now reviews, on a weekly basis, critical indicators of the company's performance, including cost, productivity, and efficiency measures. These methods and techniques have given the company solid baseline information from which to track performance, ensuring that the company and its shareholders receive an acceptable profit margin and return on investment.

WAF implemented lean manufacturing initiatives and quality control processes throughout the entire manufacturing process. It made significant technological advances and implemented robotics into the manufacturing and finishing processes to reduce its costs, improve productivity and stay competitive in the marketplace.

In the last five years, WAF has changed its chemical mixtures and processes to reduce the total Volatile Organic Compounds it emits into the air by 50%. In addition to installing two new dust collection systems, WAF has reduced its emissions from particulate dust by 60%.

While the U.S. casting industry has struggled in recent years, WAF has continued to experience operational and financial excellence. WAF is planning for and optimistic about its future. From 2001 to 2004, its sales improved dramatically, outperforming much of its competition.

It has achieved these results through increased exposure in the marketplace via sales and marketing channels. WAF continues to explore and acquire capital equipment that supports these goals. The company also continues to provide benefits to its employees that result in a productive and secure workforce, as well as its reputation as a valued employer in the Manitowoc area community.

While WAF has faced significant challenges, today it stands poised for continued growth and increased exposure in the marketplace. WAF has established itself as a one-stop shop offering engineering, machining, heat-treatment, impregnation and robotics. Continuous improvement in these and other areas will enable the company to successfully compete in the foundry industry and keep jobs right here in Wisconsin.

Wiscraft, Inc.

MILWAUKEE

"EXCELLENCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY"

Wiscraft, Inc. has created opportunity for a culturally diverse and ethnically enriched workforce of individuals who are legally blind to realize their potential and build upon their talents.

The challenges confronting the business increased dramatically starting in 2002, but through perseverance the company has prospered and excelled in the face of adversity.

The economic downturn of 2002 forced Wiscraft to make decisions to ensure the viability of its future. Not only does Wiscraft have to compete with foreign competition, it faces a set of unique challenges by providing employment for people who are legally blind.

The company suffered another blow in 2004, when its president suffered a stroke and the assembly and packaging supervisor went on medical leave in 2005. Undeterred, the company forged ahead and flourished largely due to its implementation of ISO 9001:2001 Quality Management System.

Wiscraft is a small private, non-profit cooperation and an established tier-one vendor, subcontractor and manufacturing operation. The company employs 40 people, and 95% of its direct labor force and 40% of its supervisory and administrative staff are legally blind.

Wiscraft provides subcontracting services in assembly, packaging, and precision machining varying in complexity from basic packaging tasks to complex motor assemblies, as well as a full range of precision machining. It also offers a line of proprietary products including paper products and computer accessories.

The uniqueness of its products and services is underscored by the ability of its engineering, training and supervisory personnel to provide employees with a safe work environment that will ensure success.

It provides its customers with quality production, on-time delivery, and extra value-added services such as inventory management. It has contracts with the federal government as well as local manufacturers like Harley Davidson, Briggs & Stratton, Harnischfeger, Rockwell and Oshkosh Truck, including other well-know southeastern Wisconsin companies.

Its path to success can be attributed to the development and implementation of ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System and subsequent re-certification for the past three years. The October 2002 registration highlighted Wiscraft as the first U.S. manufacturer employing people who are legally blind, to be registered to the new ISO:2000 standard.

Annual maintenance of Wiscraft's ISO 9001:2000 registration is an indication of its dedication to operational excellence on all levels, and has paved the way for the work environment to change from the perception of a rehab center to a competitive business.

Its engineering, training, and supervisory personnel utilize their vast experience and knowledge to incorporate lean methodologies into the set up of workstations, establishment of work instructions, development and fabrication of fixtures and various accommodations to ensure it is able to consistently produce high-quality products with competitive lead times.

Since the implementation of ISO 9001:2000 certification, its measured outcomes of quality, on-time delivery, production efficiencies and inventory control have improved, along with the average income of its employees. Its process improvements have been achieved by focusing on workplace organization, continuous flow work cells, standardized work instruction, and tailored training to meet individual employee needs.

Its machine shop delivery has a perfect on-time delivery record, with overall company on-time delivery consistently above 97%.

Its ability to provide top-notch quality and on-time delivery is credited, in part, to its training program that provides an evaluation of baseline skill levels and the ability to objectively match the worker with the job skills necessary to successfully provide products that meet customer requirements and expectations.

A strong sense of teamwork throughout the organization has provided success at every level, including expanded skill levels and self-confidence, ownership of customer satisfaction, participation in the implementation of new methodologies by direct labor employees, and promotion from within the ranks.

The majority of Wiscraft employees have cultivated a variety of skills that allow them to work on numerous customer orders through a training program that documents specific training, response, outcomes and goals. The company evaluates its employees semi-annually – tracking successful growth, expanded skill sets, and setting new goals.

Since 2002, the average employee tenure has grown from 1.49 years to an average of 4.97 years.

Upgrading computer stations and the addition of technology that helps employees perform their specific job tasks is a commitment Wiscraft has made to its workforce. Computers are loaded with software that converts written word into audio format, or converts written word into Braille. In addition, television monitors with zoom capability are located throughout the facility in order to enlarge documents.

In spite of its challenges, Wiscraft has experienced tremendous financial growth over the last three years, and net sales have more than doubled in just the last two years. The company is positioned to grow in commercial markets and through government contract work.

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