

CenterLines

Published by Boston Centerless and AccuRounds

Fall 2004

A Long, Strange Trip

by Steven Tamasi

"It's been a long, strange trip." I'm sure many in the manufacturing industry would agree. Over the past four years we've seen the economic and competitive conditions in our industry change drastically. The economic conditions went from bad to worse, but have now rebounded for most. As the recession took hold, many of the large multinational corporations aggressively chased lower labor costs. As the downturn became protracted, many plants either closed, were bought out or merged with larger firms. As a result, the competitive landscape has been significantly altered.

What we've just experienced can be likened to a stock market correction of sorts. Immediately after the carnage takes place, there are opportunities to invest in those companies that got

swept along with the tide, but still have a solid foundation and fundamentals. Similarly, as the economy began to heat up, so did the need for reliable, quality stateside manufacturers. Therefore, companies that were able to stick to a plan in anticipation of this upsurge are now in a position to satisfy the demand for such services.

In recent past *CenterLines* issues, I've written about our strategic planning, posture and actions we've taken in preparation for growth. Since the original plan in 1997, our team has worked diligently to execute the multitude of steps needed to prepare the organization for sustained 15% - 20% annualized growth. In other words, we were ready for this time and the opportunities that lay ahead. What I am most proud to proclaim is that while we are growing at an unprece-

dent rate – well beyond our targeted 20% growth rate, we have been able to maintain our high level of service to our customers. Our cost of quality has gone down and our on time delivery has improved.

Obviously, we had to add staff to accomplish this (we've added over 20 employees in 2004), but it can largely be attributed to three main components. They are 1) the focus on market segments where demand for high quality, quick turn services would be most valued, 2) an infrastructure built for tomorrow's workload, and 3) a strong team effort and adherence to our *TIQ Values (Teamwork / Integrity / Quality)*. Everyone has contributed his or her part, in a respectful manner, towards a common goal. For that, I thank all of the members of the BCAR team.

(Continued on page 2)

A Visit to Asia – Participating in the Global Economy

by Michael Tamasi

The invitation was open to all National Tooling & Machining Association (NTMA) members – the International Special Tooling and Machining Association's (ISTMA) Annual Conference in Bangkok, Thailand – a great opportunity to visit Asia with our peers from around the world. After much



Steven (2nd from left) and Michael Tamasi (right) visiting Thailand plant.

deliberation, Steven and I decided that this opportunity was too important

to pass up.

We made plans to attend the

reading

conference in Bangkok, and included a 2 day stop in Schenzen, China. The visit to Schenzen was the result of a key customer coordinating tours of their facility and other manufacturing plants in that region of China. This was an opportunity to see with our own eyes what we've been

about in the press and

(Continued on page 3)

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe."

- Anatole France

(Continued from page 1)

Now, I'm sure that many would also agree that 'the long, strange trip' hasn't ended. American manufacturers still have to contend with competition from China and many other low-cost countries, as well as unfair foreign trade practices and policies. In addition, we must battle a low public image, resulting in a limited infusion of talented individuals into the industry. Given these challenges, we must not deviate from what got us here. We must re-focus our efforts on continuous improvement objectives and the advancement of skills throughout the organization. During this last quarter, we will begin educating all of our team members (a refresher course for many) on the philosophy and techniques of world-class manufacturing. We have also begun to structure a program for advanced technical and team leader training. A recent training grant awarded from the state of Massachusetts will be used to support these efforts.

And we must do this all without losing sight of our customers' needs for today, and tomorrow. To stay ahead of this curve, we continue to expose and educate ourselves about the global marketplace. We recently attended an ISTMA (International Special Tooling and Manufacturing Association) conference in Bangkok, Thailand where

25 countries were represented. A member from each country spoke about emerging trends and technologies in their respective countries. From there we visited plants in Shenzhen, China to get a first hand look at the capabilities and structure of some of our potential competitors (read more on this in Asia article, pg.1).

Never satisfied with the status quo, we've continued to enhance the services we provide to the marketplace. We started a new division, which sells ultra-precise pin gages (see article on pg. 4), created some new strategic alliances, and have bolstered existing alliances. We have introduced new technological capabilities, allowing us to provide a greater range of components, and / or sub-assemblies. And in reaction to the tightening supply of raw materials, we've expanded our inventory levels and range of products.

Even with all that we've done to prepare and execute along this ever-changing journey, we wouldn't be where we are today without the patience, support and continued interest from our customers. We are grateful for the confidence that you have placed in Boston Centerless. If we stay on our mission, and continue to work together toward a common goal, we can make this a long, **successful** trip.

Profile of Patrick O'Connell



Patrick, who hails from Ireland, started with AccuRounds as Operations Manager on St. Patrick's Day 2003. His main responsibilities encompass sales, production and inventory planning; managing the flow of work through the shop. Patrick's role also involves customer satisfaction as well as purchasing / supplier management.

His career in manufacturing began as a production planner for the Nestle Corporation in Dublin. He later moved to the U.K. and worked for British Airways as a production manager in their flight catering division before returning to Ireland to take up a senior management position with one of Europe's leading designers and manufacturers of architectural window and door systems. In 1999, Patrick relocated to the U.S. and worked as General Manager for a precision engineering company in Syracuse, NY before coming to AccuRounds.

Patrick and his wife, Barbara, reside in Scituate and have two children, Paige and William. In his spare time Patrick likes to play and coach soccer for the town club. He also loves music and enjoys skiing with his family and friends.

Golden Bar Award Recipients

The Golden Bar Award is presented to employees who are nominated and selected by fellow employees for their achievements.

AccuRounds

Adelino Araujo (left) passing award on to Sean Gadsby.



Boston Centerless

Skip Woznik (left) receives award from Kevin Strahan.



Have a Happy Thanksgiving!



(Continued from page 1)

hearing about from our customers – outsourcing to Asia.

An airplane trip to the other side of the world put us in Bangkok. The conference was informative, particularly the industry reports by ISTMA member country representatives and the plant tours. To nobody's surprise, the United States and Europe reported that, in general, business conditions have been tightening the past few years, while India and Asian countries spoke of the rapid growth in tool and die and machining work in their countries.

The two plant tours in Thailand were very interesting. The first company we visited had recently moved into a new building, which was quite impressive. Their CNC and conventional support equipment was state-of-the-art. This company would rival the best shops in the U.S., and it appeared to be a well-managed operation. During the plant tour, we engaged in a conversation with an engineering employee. We learned that he went to college in the United States and interned at a company in Danvers, MA (an NTMA member company who we know quite well). Wow, what a small world!

In speaking with the company's owner and key managers after the plant tour, we identified potential business opportunities. They had some material needs, and we had some special tooling needs. This conversation prompted them to visit Boston Centerless on their trip to the United States the following month. Their visit was a positive one, and we have since placed an order for special tooling with them.

The second company we visited was a stamping facility. This company was not so current with their equipment or facility. The working environment was not very safe or organized. This visit was a stark contrast to our plant tour in the morning.

The trip to China was a tremendous learning experience. The massive and ongoing infra-structure development was an awesome sight. The continuous build-up was quite

evident, lending credence to the information coming in to the States. Shenzhen was barely on the map 10 years ago, and now it is a major manufacturing center in the world.

We visited several plants in China, which ran the gamut from good to poor. Most companies were utilizing older, used equipment to process their material, with plenty of manual labor to throw at any bottleneck.

With 1 billion people living in India and 1.3 billion people living in China, it's only natural that a shift in manufacturing takes place. As consumers, we want to purchase quality items for less money. As we drive that phenomenon, the rebalancing of manufacturing throughout the world will continue. Unfortunately, this shift may take another 20 years or longer before we see a more even distribution of product manufacturing worldwide. With labor rates in Asia less than \$1.00 per hour, Americans cannot compete on labor alone. American ingenuity needs to be strong and ever present.

As for manufacturing in the United States, the pressure on price will continue for some time. There will always be the need for a manufacturing presence in this country. Hopefully, the playing field will level to a point where more production will stay State-side than less. Only time will tell.

If you plan to be in manufacturing for the long haul, you would be wise to visit Asia and see what your competition is up to. You can make it in manufacturing in the States, but you need to pay attention to overseas activity. That knowledge, in concert with a strategic plan for the future viability of the services you provide, will bring you the success you desire.

As for the invitation to all 1,700+ NTMA companies to attend the ISTMA conference, only 6 companies attended. Continued ignorance and apathy toward the global economy, which is what less than 1% of NTMA member



CNC lathe department in Thailand facility.

attendance suggests, will be the demise of a strong manufacturing base in the United States, not our customers outsourcing to Asia. Start *participating* in the global economy today!

Footnote: I would like to thank the teams from MKS Instruments, both in Massachusetts and China, who helped make our trip easy, *informative and fun*.

Tech Tip Corner



Convert Messages to Tasks or Appointments

One powerful but largely overlooked feature in Outlook lets you convert one type of entry, such as a message, into another type, such as a task or an appointment, simply by dragging and dropping.

If you get a message scheduling a meeting, for example, drag that message onto your Calendar icon or folder. Outlook creates a new appointment with the message subject as its title and inserts the message text as a note. Just set the date and time and click Save and Close.

Similarly, make a new task by dragging a message to the Task icon or folder. The feature works the other way, too. Drag an appointment, task, or note to the Inbox, and Outlook will create a new, un-addressed message with the subject and text inserted for you.

Boston Centerless Launches PinGage Division

Boston Centerless identified a need in the marketplace for high quality gages with lead times of one week or less. As a result, a new division called PinGage was introduced in July. A natural extension to the precise grinding work that we have always provided, cylindrical lapping is used to achieve tighter tolerances and better finishes than one could normally obtain by means of the grinding process.

The PinGage division provides ultra-precise gages used for close tolerance measurements for the manufacturing industry. These products include thread measuring wires, gear measuring wires, and cylindrical plug gages, (Class X, XX, XXX and Specials). The quality and preciseness of PinGage wires ensure accurate measurement of threads, gears, and hole diameters. Also available for purchase are 3-wire thread measuring systems for fast and accurate thread measurement, and optical flats used to measure flatness.

In addition, PinGage offers cylindrical lapping services for customer supplied material or components. In order to maintain the highest quality standards in our manufacturing process and customer service, we have hired people from the gaging industry with many years of lapping, inspection and management experience.

We can also perform inspection and calibration services for your in-service gages. Feel free to call us or visit <http://www.bostoncenterless.com/pingage.htm> for more information.



Years of Service Awards



Boston Centerless

30 Years

Sal Fiandaca

20 Years

Bobby Lue

15 Years

Gordon Laxo

A Nguyen

Paul Petkewich

Skip Woznik

10 Years

Nancy Hunter

Trong Tran

5 Years

Dave Curneil

Chery Gallagher

Brandon Him

Sydan Him

Pito Ortolaza

Ream Po euth

Mike Rafferty

Tobey Shimberg

AccuRounds

20 Years

Ed Kundrot

Bob Martell

10 Years

George Earle

5 Years

Pete Healy

Tony Luong

Phuoc Nguyen

Tihu Nguyen

Alan Peterson

Bay Truong

The following employees have joined the BCAR team since our last publishing:



Welcome!

Dan Barbosa
Joe Barry
Jim Casey
Thangry Chan
Nancy Cole
Louis Cormier
Manuel Dutra
Don Fitzsimmons
Dennis Fuery
Wayne Gordon
Jeffrey Hubisz

Thanh Kim Huynh
Rodrique Joseph
Tim Lynch
Sean Mangiafico
Kevin Manning
Thy Meas
Joe McCuish
Thanh Kim Nguyen
Jeremy Olson
Tom O'Neill

Felix Quezada
Larry Salvucci
Dan Schneiderhan
Paul Thach
Rotana Thorng
Vanny Thorng
Toi Vongnaphet
Barbara Waugh
Dwight Whittier
Betty Williams

Boston Centerless

11 Presidential Way, Woburn, MA, 01801

781.994.5000 / 800.343.4111 • fax 781.994.5001

www.bostoncenterless.com • info@bostoncenterless.com

AccuRounds

15 Doherty Avenue, Avon, MA 02322

508.587.3500 / 877.882.2228 • fax 508.580.8686

www.accurounds.com • info@accurounds.com