Recycling and CIRAS Resources Are Good Mix for Remanufacturer

AMES, Iowa – A successful “re” mix is keeping Hy-Capacity Inc. on track for a $2 million expansion, job creation and environmental stewardship.

An ongoing commitment to reducing, reusing and recycling has garnered awards and recognition for the Humboldt, Iowa remanufacturer of tractor components. In addition, resources from Iowa State University Extension’s Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) help the company stay focused on continuous improvement.

Hy-Capacity has been “green” long before it was fashionable. Since 1978, Hy-Capacity has salvaged used tractor components and remanufactured them for resale. The company was founded on sustainability, always looking for ways to conserve the environment and save energy while making a profit.

“We can always do better. There are always opportunities for change,” said Cindy Danielson, Hy-Capacity’s general manager. And the company takes advantage of every opportunity for CIRAS training and resources, she added.

Over the past decade Hy-Capacity often has turned to CIRAS for training in workplace organization and lean manufacturing principles to streamline production processes and reduce waste. Thanks to business continuity planning, the company now has a comprehensive emergency plan. In addition, CIRAS is helping Hy-Capacity understand the market potential of government procurement, as the company looks beyond Iowa to further diversify for long-term sustainability.

Since 2008, CIRAS has made connections and identified additional resources to help Hy-Capacity with its Green Team Initiative. Recycling efforts have allowed the company to replace a 40-cubic-yard dumpster with one that is just four cubic yards and gain recognition as a zero-landfill company from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. In 2009, the Iowa Recycling Association named Hy-Capacity the Recycling Facility of the Year. This June the company received the Iowa Governor’s Environmental Excellence Award.

Now Hy-Capacity is participating in CIRAS’ Training Within Industry (TWI) program, Danielson said. Supervisors already have completed job instruction training, learning how to quickly train employees to do the job correctly, safely and conscientiously, resulting in less scrap and rework, fewer accidents, and less tool and equipment damage. The company also plans to complete TWI Job methods, Job Relations, and Job Safety training, Danielson said.

CIRAS also has helped Hy-Capacity make use of radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology to improve efficiency in tracking inventory. The RFID analysis brought Iowa State engineering students to the company during the 2009-2010 school year.

“We opened up our manufacturing plant and let them work with our production people one on one,” Danielson said. “It’s not just about the students learning. Helping them grow also helped us grow.”

Hy-Capacity has never turned down an opportunity to be a CIRAS test site, said Danielson, who also serves on the CIRAS Advisory Council. “We like to be a pilot program to help others learn.”
In June Hy-Capacity broke ground for a major expansion. The company reports that the building is being designed with the latest environmental stewardship best practices in mind, including integrated geothermal and wind power systems to improve the facility’s energy efficiency. CIRAS is bringing in another Iowa State engineering class to develop an efficient layout for the new building, Danielson said.

“As part of our success, we acknowledge CIRAS. We know without [CIRAS] resources, the road would have been much different,” she added. CIRAS is “a part of our company — a part of our team.”

For more information about how CIRAS can help Iowa companies, contact CIRAS Account Manager Brenda Martin, bkmartin@iastate.edu, or visit the CIRAS website, www.ciras.iastate.edu.

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