



Lean Practices/Government Contracts Help Quality Machine of Iowa, Inc., Move Forward

Tim Greene, president of Quality Machine of Iowa, Inc. (QMI), sees Lean Manufacturing as a key for continuous improvement, being globally competitive, and winning government contracts. He has led the full-service precision machining company—which was started in Minneapolis, Minnesota, by his father in 1968—for nearly 30 years.

Today, with headquarters and main plant in Audubon, Iowa, and a smaller production facility in Minneapolis, QMI produces a wide range of products such as service tools for the automotive and agricultural industries as well as components for the hydraulic, medical, and defense industries.

Greene has worked with CIRAS since 2010 to incorporate Lean principles and to expand his customer base to include the federal government.

“It’s only wise to take all of the excess costs out of things,” Greene explains. “If you have any wasted time or effort, your prices will be too high and you will lose business.”

CIRAS account manager Bob Coacher, along with project manager Jeff Mohr, guided QMI through the 5S process. “The goal is to improve throughput capacity in the facility,” Coacher says. The process includes everything from organizing and cleaning the work area and equipment to learning problem-solving tools to improving communication between company leadership and those operating the equipment.

Greene notes that the process has led to a positive culture change. “We use Lean practices in terms of shop organization and all of the processes on the machine side as well as the practices of employees from the front office to the person shipping out products. If something isn’t working right, we’ll do a corrective action on it and go after it.”

While implementation of Lean principles is ongoing, QMI also credits CIRAS for assistance with government procurement. Government contracting specialist Gordon

Bonnes guided Greene through the bidding process from researching the market to creating a capability statement to understanding the regulations and how to comply.

“We point out the things they don’t need to be concerned with and emphasize those that must be addressed,” Bonnes explains. He also helped identify the appropriate buying offices or agencies in the targeted market with the goal of helping them understand the market and the competition.

“This has been a big plus for us,” says Greene. “We weren’t aware how important it is to state your capabilities briefly. That is key when you want people to understand your core business and what relates directly to them and their needs.”

QMI’s efforts are paying off. In 2011, Greene was asked to partner in bidding a new defense weapons system designed to clear land mines. A five-year contract was awarded in 2012.

Overall, Greene reports \$2 million of impact—\$1 million in increased sales and \$1 million in retention of sales—thanks to Lean practices and government contracts. “We have to keep people wanting to do business with us, and CIRAS has helped us do that,” he says.

Greene’s success has been recognized in Iowa and nationally. The Iowa State University Small Business Development Center presented him with the 2011 Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year Award, and the U.S. Small Business Administration honored Greene as the 2012 Iowa Small Business Person of the Year.

➤ For more information, contact Bob Coacher at 515-419-2162 or coacher@iastate.edu.