

Radius Steel Fabrication-SOO Tractor Targets New Industries

Radius Steel-SOO Tractor in Sioux City, Iowa, has built a solid reputation as a leading steel fabrication company. The Mahaney family founded SOO Tractor Sweeprake Company in 1941 to meet the needs of the agricultural machinery industry and provide meaningful employment for skilled workers. The privately held firm recently rebranded to Radius Steel Fabrication, a name that better describes who the company is and what they do, according to Allen Mahaney, president. The goal is to expand into new industries including defense, automotive, energy, heavy construction, and waste management.

"This creates a company with a diversified portfolio, as well as safeguards us from the dependency and vagaries of any one product category, product line, distribution pattern, or seasonality," says Ida Covi, CEO of Radius Steel.

The move to diversify is the most recent example of how the company's leadership team is dedicated to successfully expanding the business while maintaining high standards of durability and reliability.

During the first 30 years, Radius Steel-SOO Tractor manufactured and sold agricultural equipment under its own name. In the early '70s, the transition began to original equipment manufacturer (OEM). That meant producing products such as front-end loaders, backhoes, and attachments to major construction and agricultural equipment for other companies to sell under their respective brand names.

The company expanded its customer base more in 1992, when it became a major supplier for AGCO, a global leader in agricultural equipment. AGCO products include a full line of tractors, combines, and hay tools sold through four core brands—Challenger®, Fendt®, Massey Ferguson®, and Valtra®.

The company's long-standing focus on precision, quality, and continuous improvement has remained steadfast throughout its history. "We are constantly striving to improve and innovate to be an industry leader," Covi says. "No matter how small the improvements, they incrementally add value to our goals, lower costs, and lead to an even greater manufacturing precision."

The effort to earn ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001 Quality Management System

certification is one indicator of this focus. This family of standards includes development of a documented system to manage quality assurance throughout the business and establishment of an internal auditing capability to effectively maintain the system.

In early 2010 Radius Steel-SOO Tractor began working with Bob Coacher, CIRAS account manager, to develop and implement the ISO quality management system. "They recognized the importance of ISO certification to gain new customers in the global marketplace," Coacher says.

The process began by conducting a gap analysis of the existing system. Subsequently a number of procedures were rewritten, defined, and added. Managers, supervisors, and employees were trained to use and manage their new system, and an internal audit team was selected and trained to insure continued use and compliance. CIRAS then conducted a preregistration audit and provided feedback on any missing components. Finally, a certified ISO 9000:2008 registrar audited the company's system, and the official registration certificate was issued in August 2010.

"With CIRAS' assistance we were able to simplify our processes and get certified with very few problems," Mahaney says.

The company has reported substantial increased sales and cost savings since its certification. Also, more than 20 new jobs have been added for a total of 130 employees.



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