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CYBERSECURITY:
The Next Must-Have to Business Growth

Neal Crosley poses with members of his family who will be the next generation of leadership for the company.

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CYBERSECURITY: The Next Must-Have to Business Growth

By Allison Hayes

A local machine shop has seen one of its best years ever, in the midst of a pandemic, due in part to a diversified business model and a good quality management system.

High-Tech Machine Co. Inc. (HTM) was started in 1991 by Neal Crosley. The precision CNC and Wire EDM machine company, located in Wilmington, Delaware, began operating out of a 1,000-square-foot facility with three manual machines. Thirty years later, the business has grown into a 10,000-square-foot space with 20 CNC machines and more than 20 employees. The company manufactures high-precision parts to customer requirements, with every job being custom. Crosley, founder and president, said his business remains focused on quality improvement and family.

"We try to keep that competitive edge, and keep the cost down for customers," he said. "Continuous improvement is key."

To help with improving business capabilities, Crosley began working with the Delaware Manufacturing Extension Partnership (DEMPEP), a federally and state-funded non-profit organization committed to helping manufacturers improve their global competitiveness. DEMPEP is the official representative of the MEP National Network in Delaware. The MEP National Network™ is a unique public-private partnership that delivers comprehensive, proven solutions to U.S. manufacturers, fueling growth and advancing.

DEMPEP operates as a recipient through Delaware Technical Community College in partnership with the United States Department of Commerce, National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Delaware Division of Small Business, and the Delaware State and local Chambers of Commerce. Through these partnerships, DEMPEP draws its resources from local and national universities, community colleges, research institutions, private consultants, and a network of 51 MEP Centers located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. With these unique relationships, the Delaware MEP can

provide its clients confidential access to their industries best practices, processes and business improvement methodologies.

Crosley first connected with DEMPEP in 2007 to get help with the company's ISO 9001 certification. ISO 9001 is the internationally recognized Quality Management System standard, designed to be a powerful business improvement tool. DEMPEP helped to develop HTM-specific procedures and processes and conducted extensive training with Crosley and his employees. The company earned its ISO 9001 certification in 2008. HTM then worked with DEMPEP for 5S training, which helped the company organize its spaces so work could be performed more efficiently, effectively, and safely. The 5S system focuses on putting everything where it belongs, making it easier for people to do their jobs without wasting time or risking injury.

Over the past several years, Crosley began hearing more and more about cybersecurity and good cyber hygiene, which refers to fundamental cybersecurity best practices that an organization's users can implement to protect the security of customers digital information. They include not only hardware and software, but configuration and rigorously managed maintenance of who has access to those systems. In addition, employees learn about the risks of violating policy and management of all protocols.

To remain competitive and continue as a Department of Defense (DoD) supply chain partner, Crosley knew he needed to be ready to meet the latest cybersecurity measures recommended by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (called publication SP 800-171). DoD has already announced the next iteration in cybersecurity requirements - Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) - which is built around the previous SP 800-171 publications for anyone handling Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI). The CMMC is targeted for full adoption by 2025.

“Cybersecurity and best practices are no longer a nice to have,” said Kelly McKeown, DEMEP specialist who works with HTM, “It’s a requirement for doing business and it’s not going away. Some companies are intimidated by the process of getting their company certified and are no longer willing to go after government contracts.”

Implementing a comprehensive cybersecurity compliant system will involve more than just potentially upgrading hardware and software. A compliant system will require training and engagement by staff at all levels, and the implementation of business practices that ensure adherence to the practices and procedures adopted to meet compliance with the CMMC controls.

“Only then will you have what it takes to be successful during your certification audit and adequately maintain your obligations between certification audits,” said McKeown,

Given the similarity between ISO 9001 standards and the updated SP 800-171 controls, Crosley again turned to DEMEP for assistance. HTM is one of several Delaware companies that has decided to reach for this level of certification. It allows HTM to bid on work that many competitors cannot.

“We did this work during the pandemic,” he said. “We got through it with our key employees receiving the training to keep us in compliance with the controls.”

Crosley said, “It was challenging, but DEMEP made the process manageable by breaking it down into steps with training and organization.”



State-of-the-art CNCs ensure quality.



HTM Quality Manager Larry Parks inspecting parts.

“DEMEP made the process manageable by breaking it down into steps with training and organization.”

~ Neal Crosley

“Once you understand it, you just have to put processes in place and do what you say you’re going to do,” he said.

Crosley said becoming compliant has created opportunities for more work.

“Our customers want to know how their information such as blueprints, 3D models, and classified specifications are controlled,” he said. “Everyone understands what needs to be done and how it is done. Everything is documented and in a certain place and our customers are confident their information is safe. And DEMEP helped us do all that.”

Crosley said he is constantly working to improve. On the horizon is the AS9100 quality certification, which will allow HTM to further expand their customer base in the aerospace industry.

“With the Crosleys’ focus on family and customer satisfaction,” said McKeown, “they have developed a very successful business model that will allow HTM to maintain stability and growth well into the future and continue to be a leader in a very competitive industry.”



Quality control is a keystone of HTM.