

OPENING THE DOOR TO STABLE, STEADY GROWTH

Careful planning, diversifying customer base key to Weber Manufacturing's success



Chris Edwards, president of Weber Manufacturing Technologies, said revenue has more than doubled and staff has expanded to 194 from 115 since 2007. Ian Burns/Metroland

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Special

Diversification is playing a pivotal role in the growth and continued success of Weber Manufacturing Technologies Inc., insulating the Midland company from economic and market fluctuations.

"The groundwork Weber laid years ago is paying off," said president Chris Edwards. "We have really been increasing our customer base so we are not economically dependent on a few key accounts. We also grew our product line to service multiple industry sectors. It's made Weber very strong."

That careful planning has paid off with stable, steady growth.

"This year has been really busy," he

continued. "Consistently, year over year, we have been growing since the ownership change in 2007."

Revenue has more than doubled and staff has expanded to 194 – and still growing – from 115.

"Due to this growth, we have an open ad for machinists and licensed mould makers," Edwards said.

Founded in 1962, Weber is a fully integrated mould manufacturer for the aerospace, automotive and home-building marketplace. Home to the world's largest nickel-vapour deposition (NVD) facility, Weber uses this innovative technology to offer flexible design options and has built a world-class reputation as creative problem solvers.





“When customers have a problem, they come to us for creative solutions. We bring solutions to the table that come from other industries,” Edwards said. “We may apply automotive technology and knowledge (of) aeronautics, for instance.”

Bucking the trend, Weber made the strategic decision to move its MasterGrain door-manufacturing process out of Mexico in 2013.

“Pulling out of Mexico was a really strong move for us logistically, for quality control, and to give us complete control over our destiny,” Edwards explained.

The premium, fibreglass, residential-entry-door product line relies on the local NVD technology. With a workforce already approaching 40 employees, MasterGrain is focused on building brand awareness and establishing itself to North American consumers.

Weber’s leading-edge technology, expertise and diverse products are an eye opener – for teachers and students who tour the plant and other local manufacturers who have gathered in roundtable discussions spearheaded by the Economic Development Corporation of North Simcoe.

“Many people are surprised by what we do,” Edwards said. “We are the preferred supplier to Boeing. We are well known in the luxury car market with As-

With a workforce already approaching 40 employees, including Brandon Wade, the MasterGrain line is focused on building brand awareness and establishing itself to North American consumers. Ian Burns/Metroland



Tyler Rose operates the CNC five-axis milling machine. He is working on a metal frame for a nickel-shell automobile interior. Ian Burns/Metroland

ton Martin, Alfa Romeo and Porsche. Our customer roster includes BMW, Mercedes, Ford, GM, Boeing, Bell helicopter and GE aerospace division. We have quite a solid Fortune 500 portfolio of customers.”

Those roundtable discussions have brought manufacturers together, and Weber is leading the way in the search for skilled trades.

“Weber has become very active in the development of people towards skilled trades,” Edwards said. “North Simcoe is a great place to work, live and play. At Weber, there is a great opportunity for a career with growth potential into a management position.

“Our employee retention is high because of good wages and benefits, balanced lifestyle and living in an area with seasonal activities. Millennials are looking for balance and we have it here. Employees don’t start the day tense after a long, stressful commute. It’s a small town, a perfect place to bring up a family.”

Weber boasts an in-house machinist training course, but Edwards said they also attend skilled-trades shows, work with Georgian College and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, and take an active approach at high schools across north Simcoe to encourage youths to discover opportunities close to home.

“We can teach the skills if they have a good attitude, work ethic and communication,” he said, adding Weber empowers its employees with an open-door culture and a belief in group consensus to create solutions and advancement. “We like to promote from within, and 70.5 per cent of our management and senior management came from the shop floor.”

As for the future, Edwards said Weber will continue to invest in itself with new equipment to improve both its capability and capacity.