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Business growth based on precision

Attention to every detail pays off for savvy shop

By ANDREA DECKERT

K&H Precision Products Inc. has seen its sales and staff increase dramatically since its inception nearly two decades ago.

The Honeoye Falls-based company provides full casting, tooling and machining services for the automotive, building products, packaging and vacuum form industries. The firm was founded in 1985 by Steven Hogarth and David Knebel in a carriage barn across from its current 20,000-square-foot location on Norton Street.

Hogarth, K&H Precision's president, calls former partner Knebel and himself pattern makers by trade and entrepreneurs by nature. The duo bought equipment at auctions and added tradesmen to their growing business a little at a time. In 1989, they moved the business with 16 employees into the larger facility.

K&H Precision started with annual sales of some \$40,000. At the end of the company's fiscal year in June, Hogarth estimates yearly sales will be roughly \$5 million—up from an average of \$3.8 million in annual sales over the past three years.

The firm also has witnessed an increase in its work force from 31 staffers in 2003 to 42 people today. A second work shift recently was added to meet increased volumes.

"It's been a strong year," says Hogarth, noting that the company continues to move forward. "The industry changes ... and you've got to keep up with it."

He views K&H Precision as a one-stop shop for design, prototyping, production



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Steven Hogarth: "We aren't running a run-of-the-mill shop."

and packaging. The firm's customers include Delphi Corp., General Motors Corp., Eastman Kodak Co. and Harris Corp.'s RF Communications Division.

One of the keys to the company's success is its employees, Hogarth says. Many K&H Precision staffers have been with the company for at least a decade. Alexander Ferguson, an 18-year veteran, was promoted from project manager to vice president after Knebel retired in May.

Another part of the firm's success can be attributed to diversifying its customer base and manufacturing capabilities while

not overextending debt, Hogarth says.

K&H Precision also keeps up with the latest technologies. In addition to its original pattern tooling expertise, the company offers direct computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing services for patterns and castings, customer design support, casting and machining of metals and plastics, and other services. Its CAD and CAM tooling capabilities set the firm apart, Hogarth says.

"We aren't running a run-of-the-mill shop," he adds.

K&H has a full foundry, two designers, a complete machine shop—with 12 computerized numerical control machines—and machine programmers.

"Having designing, casting and machining capabilities in one house has been very good for us," Hogarth says.

He places an emphasis on serving the customers' needs, getting involved early on with things like part design, which can lower up-front tooling and casting costs.

In addition to creating its own castings, K&H Precision also works with other shops to expand its capabilities.

Hogarth predicts solid growth in 2005, especially in the automotive, medical, and tools and equipment sectors. He expects the company to continue to excel at low-volume production prototypes. K&H Precision's industry experience makes the company valuable at any level, he adds.

Hogarth attributes the upswing in business to a number of factors, including a better economic climate than in the recent past, and the downsizing of larger companies now looking at outsourcing options. K&H Precision's reputation also helps, he says.

"Companies that survive through the tough times are the strongest," Hogarth says.

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