

Recession Busters: Volume I – Machine Specialties Inc.

July 21, 2009

Industry: Manufacturing

**Line of Business: Precision Machining and Fabrication, Metal Finishing,
Assembly and Engineering Services**

Employees: 100

Machine Shop Goes From “Good to Great” During Recession

GREENSBORO, NC – Despite a growing trend of closings among American machine shops caused by the current recession, Machine Specialties Inc. (MSI) of Greensboro, NC has refused to participate. This week I had an opportunity to speak with Lenny Meyers, a Business Analyst and Human Resources Manager with MSI, who spoke pretty candidly about how the business has been able to post gains and remain strong throughout.

Back In December of 2007, MSI’s leadership team sat down in a series of lunch meetings to discuss the company’s strategy as an economic recession seemed to be looming. The move was a proactive one. Their goal was to make certain that if the recession did hit that they would be positioned as the vendor of choice. Everyone in the business was a part of the conversation. The outcome was that MSI would increase efforts in two specific areas.

“In no way would we let our quality slip.” Providing a quality product every single time had always been at the forefront, but now it had become a non-negotiable. In addition, on-time delivery was the second area that the company would accept nothing below perfection. Although they were always very good, MSI recognized that it was necessary to raise the bar and become exceptional.

As our conversation continued it became clear the ultimate driving force behind

MSI's ability to improve in those two areas was the company's ability to find and select good people, find the right role for them, and keep them committed and happy.

Jim Collins writes about companies that transform from being good to great in his book, aptly titled, Good to Great. One of the key discoveries he finds is that great companies are led by leaders that get the right people on the bus and equally important, find the right seat for them. MSI VP of Operations, Rebecca Bush, believes that this very concept is something that the company does extremely well.

Companies that excel in this area tend to have an exceptional understanding of how to creatively reward their employees which ultimately results in greater productivity. "Our owner, Rob Simmons, is committed to constantly investing back into the company specifically in regards to the purchase of the latest equipment which allows us to stay on the cutting edge technologically. The best employees deserve the best equipment."

The people that drive MSI most recently led the company to being recognized by the Triad Business Journal as one of the fastest 50 growing companies in the greater Triad Area (Greensboro, Winston-Salem, High Point). Additionally, the Triad Business Journal recognized MSI as a top ten finalist in the mid-sized company division for "Best Places to Work".

When I asked Lenny if other businesses could use that model and be successful regardless of economic conditions he said this:

"Any business that hires great people, puts the customer first 100% of the time, provides 100% customer service, and if you have a product or service that people want or need, I don't see how you can't win eventually. It's what is the definition of eventually for everybody, right?"

MSI didn't get lucky. They haven't become a better business by being in the right place at the right time. MSI has been winning in one of the most difficult business environments in our country's history because they have a strong leadership team

that surrounds themselves with great people that are passionate about customer satisfaction.

Good intuition and persistence pays off every time...eventually. It's the great companies, like MSI, that make eventually happen sooner rather than later.

Posted by: [Mike Schaefer](#)

Categories: [Uncategorized](#)