

Journey to Ownership

Eric Dales, owner of Adam's Automatic, Inc. in Olmsted Falls, Ohio, earned his GED, earned his machinist certificate, started work at Adam's Automatic, became a Certified Journeyman Machinist through an apprenticeship program, and bought the business in 2012.



PMPA: What is a brief history of Adam's Automatic, Inc?

Eric Dales: James Adamitis founded Adam's Automatic in 1952 and the company handled tube cutting and forming for musical instruments. In the 1960's, the company was purchased by Jesse Bond, and in 1971, Jesse's son, Ed, purchased Adam's Automatic. Under Ed's leadership, the company transitioned to screw machine parts and, in the 1990's, we began to transition from screw machines to CNC machines. We now use CNC machines for turning and milling. Discussions of succession planning began when Ed was ready to retire and, in 2012, my wife and I bought the company.

PMPA: What was your journey to business owner?

ED: I didn't graduate from high school and held a variety of jobs from the time I could start working. Then I realized that I wanted a career and not a job. I really liked working with my hands and I was mechanically inclined, so I did some research. I earned my GED and, in 1999, I went through a machine trades program at Lorain County JVS. After the one-year program, I earned my certificate and started working for Adam's Automatic. I was very green when I started; I had training but limited experience. Around 2001, I went back to Lorain County JVS for their four-year apprenticeship program and became a Certified Journeyman Machinist. I just kept learning as much as I could on the job.

In 2006, the foreman left the company, so I had a conversation with Ed, the owner at the time, and he decided to bring me into a general



Eric Dales working on the shop's latest addition: a fiber laser system.

manager position. I kept learning and then bought the company in 2012.

PMPA: Has your journey inspired others?

I hope so. I have been reaching out to the local trade schools and high schools to share my story. We have also hosted high school and trade school students here for job shadowing opportunities. I think it is helpful for them to have the "real world experience." I think it could help others follow the path to precision machining. In fact, I am planning to share my story through a blog later this year.

PMPA: What are your plans for Adam's Automatic?

ED: We just bought a laser marking machine, so we are planning to offer that service. In addition, we are putting together a marketing plan to expand our customer base and add growth. We currently serve the hydraulic, electronic, medical, valve, air tool, oil & gas, instrumentation, adhesive application, powder coating, air compressor and physical dexterity industries. We work with a variety of materials, so we have a lot to offer. Word-of-mouth has served us well, but I want to

get an updated website and marketing plan in place to get our message out.

In the early 90s the focus was on quality parts, on-time delivery and competitive pricing. These days everyone should be able to offer that, so we are very focused on our customer service. We have asked our current customers what they really want. It's our customer service and commitment to continuous improvement combined with quality parts, on-time delivery and competitive pricing that keeps them as a customer. We pride ourselves on our communications and the deep relationships we have with our customers. We have customers who are still with us even though they have changed the company they work for. Some I consider friends.

PMPA: Why do you value your PMPA membership?

ED: I find the networking and the Listserves to be very valuable. I am on the Technical, HR and Corporate Listserves and it is always interesting to see what other shops are doing. In the Technical Listserve, someone will ask about materials or tooling or say that they are having an issue with something and ask if anyone has experienced it. And then there are all these replies from all these people in our industry with all of their experience and they are willing to share it; I like having access to all of this experience. And every now-and-then I get a golden nugget; something I never thought to try or using that type of tooling or a different perspective on how to solve a problem. Additionally, through the PMPA, I have been able to take advantages of certain opportunities which would have not been available otherwise. **PMPA**