

PMPA Member Astra Precision Finds Success in Diverse Product Capabilities and Strong Customer Support

In 1995, Sal and Louise Trichilo purchased Astra Precision, a small mom-and-pop screw machine shop in Toronto, with a strong ambition to raise the company to new heights and position itself as an industry leader in a number of global markets. Mr. and Mrs. Trichilo moved Astra Precision to Brampton, Ontario, in 1998, where a 9,000-square-foot facility with six Davenport multi-spindle screw machines quickly outgrew its headquarters. Today, the facility is twice that size with 30 employees and a shop floor equipped with 18 Davenports, 10 Acme Gridleys and four Brown and Sharpe machines. The company is also run by the Trichilos' three children, Elaine Osti, Rob Trichilo and Jen Silaidis.

"Once Sal took over, the customer base saw his aggressiveness and the potential for what we could do, and that's what opened the door," says Elaine Osti, estimating and customer support for Astra. The Davenports haven't stopped running since."

Much of Astra's early business came from the sporting goods industry, specifically screws for hockey helmets. Mr. Trichilo's decades of sales experience allowed him to grow his existing customer base through cold-calling and investments in new technology. The company's current lineup of machinery affords it the capabilities to serve a number of markets, including heating and air conditioning, electrical, plumbing and high-end casters.

"We're not a shop that runs the same products day after day," says Rob Trichilo, estimating and engineering at Astra Precision. "We run on diversity, and that means we run different products all the time. We've been growing this company since the day we bought it, so we are

always looking into opportunities for expansion with our customers."

PMPA members since 1999, Astra Precision uses the organization's networking and member communication to bring fresh perspectives into its own business model. Mr. Trichilo says he's impressed by the number of direct competitors within the organization that are willing to share their expertise. Ms. Osti adds that the wealth of highly experienced and educated speakers PMPA provides have been highly beneficial to Astra Precision's growth.

"It's the kind of education and support you don't get when you're tied to a busy work day," Ms. Osti says. "It's very energizing, and I feel like I'm on overload when I return to work, because I don't know which idea to implement first."

As manufacturers continue to reach out to younger generations entering the workforce, Astra Precision often applies what it learns from PMPA training sessions in its efforts to recruit students from local colleges and high schools.

"We're implementing a lot of in-house training sessions on topics specific to what we do in the shop," Mr. Trichilo says. "Training employees the way we would like them to work is something the PMPA has shown us how to do well."

In its 20 years, the one facet that has remained constant in Astra Precision's business model is its dedication to customer service. Whether it's client golf outings or running a last-minute delivery after normal work hours, Ms. Osti assures that Astra Precision provides the type of individual care expected from a family company.



"Being a family-owned company, we try to provide our customers with a friendly, casual attitude," Ms. Osti says. "People feel comfortable to come in and ask for whatever they want, often without an appointment, and we're always available to them."

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