

# PMPA Member Cox Manufacturing Finds Success in Product Innovation, Serving a Diverse Clientele

Long before he bought the machine that laid the foundation for Cox Manufacturing Co., William Cox, Sr. worked on airplanes for the United States military. During his service, Mr. Cox realized he had a knack for solving technical problems and thought he could take that knowledge and start a business. After the war, Mr. Cox saw a Swiss automatic screw machine for sale at an auction. Without any knowledge of how to use it, he bought the machine, hired some part-time help to set it up and rented a small space in an existing shop.

When Cox Manufacturing began in 1956, the company had early success from producing small stainless steel bobbins used for computer memory. The computer industry was taking off and every bit of computer memory required one of these bobbins. More than 60 years later, Cox Manufacturing is one of Texas' leading suppliers of high-precision custom parts for a large number of industries.

Cox Manufacturing is currently headed by Mr. Cox's son, Bill Cox, who became president of the company at age 24. At just nine years old, Bill Cox talked to customers and wrote his first order. After his father passed away when he was 12, Bill Cox was asked by his mother if he'd be interested in taking over the business when he grew up. From there, Bill Cox started working summers in the shop until he joined the business full time at age 20.

"I grew up assuming this is what I'd do," Bill Cox says. "Like my dad, I had an affinity for solving technical problems. I enjoy all aspects of the business, from marketing, to employee development and customer engagement."

Without his father to teach him about the industry, Mr. Cox relied on his father's old transcripts from PMPA Technical Conferences to learn about the industry's history and how different shops made their parts. With such a wealth of information at his disposal, Mr. Cox was able to take the financial management literature from these transcripts and manuals to develop his first job costing system.

"I didn't have anyone to mentor me when I was moving up in the company," Mr. Cox says. "PMPA really facilitated my growth through those resources. I learned more about the industry from reading those technical documents than any class I took in college."

Cox Manufacturing is equipped with a full complement of precision Swiss CNC lathes, multi-spindle cam automatics, CNC milling centers and an extensive in-house tooling facility, and serves a number of industries, including automotive, aircraft, medical and firearm machining. In



addition to manufacturing parts, the company offers additional services, such as a design advice, parts assembly and inventory arrangement. One of Cox's competitive advantages is its ability to meet exact specifications and recreate complex geometries for all types of specialized materials.

"One of the things we've tried to focus on over the last decade is not conceding the battle to low-cost offshore competitors," Mr. Cox says. "We make it a point to take on challenging parts that other shops wouldn't make. Being creative and innovative while keeping costs down to compete with these offshore manufacturers is one of our biggest goals."

While PMPA was an integral part of Mr. Cox's professional growth as a young professional, the organization still plays a large part in the company's success. Cox Manufacturing sends several of its employees to technical conferences and the Management Update conference. The company also values PMPA's listserve and the breadth of information found on them.

"As the saying goes, 'there is wisdom in a counsel of many,'" Mr. Cox says. "You can have a challenging job, describe your problem on the listserve and get a ton of industry expertise weighing in and giving advice on the challenge you're experiencing. To us, that's invaluable."

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