

PMPA Member Horberg Industries Finds Success in its Longevity and Attention to Detail

More than 84 years ago, William Horberg founded what would become Horberg Industries, one of the industry's leading suppliers of precision pins. Coming from humble beginnings, the second son of 10 children by Swedish emigrant parents, he attended a one-room schoolhouse until the sixth grade and began working at the age of 12. After attending a trade school in Danbury, Connecticut, Mr. Horberg worked at the Ball & Roller Bearing Co., where the centerless grinder was invented. Amazed by this new and innovative technology, he would eventually use these machines to start his own shop in 1935, Centerless Grinding Works, in the shipping department of a machine tool company in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

In order to keep pace with customers' needs, the company adopted "continuous improvement" as its framework, even before it became an accepted practice in the industry. This meant instituting changes to its equipment, skills and even its name. In 1993, the current management team was established and the

company name was updated to reflect the new changes in products, services and capabilities of the "new" Horberg Industries.

Today, the company is primarily a contract manufacturer of pins, shafts and similarly configured parts for aerospace, defense, medical, technology and other precision industries. With a proven track record of manufacturing excellence, the company offers its customers full-service solutions to managing their precision pin requirements.

"In today's environment, it's not enough to simply supply a premium quality product," says Robert Leety, president of Horberg Industries. "You must continually keep your finger on the pulse of your customers' needs, which includes staying compliant with the latest applicable regulations. In our niche, we know that our products are put under a lot of physical and regulatory scrutiny, not only by our customers, but often by our customers' customers. We must ensure that every detail is addressed."

Mr. Leety says regulatory compliance is tasked to the supply chain in the aerospace and defense industries with increasing frequency and granularity. For Horberg Industries, one of the keys to meeting that challenge is its flexible and highly customizable ERP system.

"Our ERP system has allowed us to keep track of reportable elements contained within the materials from which our products are made," Mr. Leety says. "In the case of 'conflict minerals' reporting, if not for our ERP software, it would take an army of employees to sift through material certifications in order to compile the requested information."

Given their clientele and Horberg's size, limited resources have become one of Horberg's biggest challenges with respect to regulatory compliance. In almost all cases, their shop must comply with the same degree as a company that is many times their size. Mr. Leety says in order to overcome these obstacles, the company turned to leveraging its membership in industry trade groups. When Horberg Industries needed to put together outreach statements on the subject of RoHS (Restriction of Hazardous Substances) and REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals) compliance, the company turned to PMPA and its interim director, Miles Free.

"We needed a knowledgeable sounding board: someone who was willing to let us bounce ideas off



Continues on page 18

Continued from page 14

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them and help us put some meat on the bones of our statements, in order to fully articulate our compliance," Mr. Leety says. "One of the things I appreciate about Miles, in addition to his willingness to collaborate, is that he doesn't pencil-whip. He gives the topic serious consideration and participates in the process as though he was dealing with his own business."

As a relatively new member, Mr. Leety says the company also takes advantage of the plethora of information that PMPA provides through its listserves and surveys. In particular, Horberg has benefitted from PMPA's Wage Survey, which annually reports the wages paid in shops across the country based on position, machine type, shop sales volume and more.

"It's a wonderful thing to have colleagues who are willing to share helpful information, and it's equally as wonderful to be able to help other members who may be struggling with an issue that you've already overcome," Mr. Leety says. "I was honestly not aware that PMPA offered so much value; I regret not having become a member years ago!"

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