

PMPA Member Laurel Steel Finds Success in Quality Products and Workplace Safety

In 1967, Milton E. Harris, owner of J. Harris and Sons, was approached by a salesman from a small steel products shop outside of Orangeville, Ontario, Canada, who convinced Mr. Harris to buy the company and adopt its name, Laurel Steel Products. A year later, Laurel Steel purchased its first single wire drawing machine and immediately transformed the company from a modest service operation into a manufacturer delivering descaled wire to the market by the truckload. Soon after, Laurel Steel's products made their way into the automotive sector, and for the last 50 years they have remained one of the top suppliers of free machining steel.

"Within a short period of time, free machining steel became the cornerstone of our business," says John Supple, vice president and general manager at Laurel Steel. "No matter how big or small, every customer matters to us. We are always looking for opportunities to grow with our customers, by providing them with the highest quality products and service that our industry has to offer."

Today, Laurel Steel is headquartered in a state-of-the-art, 350,000-square-foot facility in Burlington, Ontario, and primarily manufactures cold-drawn steel bar products for the service center, fluid power and automotive industries. Several years ago, Laurel Steel created Cutter's Choice, a cold-drawn bar product customers could request that exceeded the industry requirements at the time.

"We wanted a brand that would separate us from our competitors," Mr. Supple says. "We believe our products are superior from a quality and service standpoint, and Cutter's Choice was something that helped make us more recognizable and reinforced our commitment to providing the highest quality in the industry."

Laurel Steel was the first North American cold-finisher to receive ISO certification, a standard required of automotive suppliers. Today, the company is ISO/TS16949 accredited and working toward IATF16949 developed by the international automotive task force. Laurel Steel knows that it's important for the company to keep up with its customers' ever-changing standards. Laurel Steel also realizes that these standards are no longer only focused on quality, but they also drive improvements in its overall business practices.

"We saw real value in showing our automotive customers that we wanted to partner alongside of them and improve our product quality to the level required of that



industry," says Miriam Schroeter, inside sales supervisor at Laurel Steel. "We want our customers to be sure we're providing a product that is coming from a facility that recognizes and achieves those standards."

In addition to its high-quality steel products, one of Laurel Steel's greatest strengths is its employee safety. After being acquired by Nucor (as part of Nucor's acquisition of the Harris Steel Group in 2007), Laurel Steel embraced Nucor's culture, which is centered around a heightened focus on safety. At one point, Laurel Steel logged more than 2 million man-hours without a lost-time accident and went more than two years without an employee needing medical assistance due to an accident.

As a longtime PMPA member, Laurel Steel benefits from the opportunity to network with customers, and to learn about new technology and industry trends. Laurel Steel's membership also allows the company to exchange ideas with other members.

"It gives us a great opportunity to understand where our customers' business is going and what their needs are now, as well as into the future," Mr. Supple says. "It has a broad membership base and helps us understand many of the challenges faced by the industry on both the customer and supply sides. Finding ways to work together with our customers makes us both more successful!"

Laurel Steel is located at 5400 Harvester Road, Burlington, Ontario, L7R 3Y8 Canada. Phone: 800-265-6811. Website: laurelsteel.com