

PMPA Member Swissturn/USA Finds Success in Customer Investment and Employee Training

Since he was 10 years old, Kenneth Mandile has been immersed in the world of screw machining. Walking the shop floors of his father's Swiss screw machine shops as a child, Mr. Mandile learned about the high-precision, high-production machinery that drove the craftsmanship of industries, such as watchmaking. In 1987, Mr. Mandile wanted to incorporate the modern technology inspired by those machines and, with his father, founded Swissturn/USA, a CNC machine job shop that specializes in Swiss screw machine products that produce made-to-order stainless steel, brass, copper, plastic and many other types of parts.

"Our biggest competitive advantage has been our responsiveness to the customer," says Mr. Mandile, president at Swissturn/USA. "We invest in our customers, and we aren't afraid to take a chance on a new job or process."

In 2013, Swissturn opened its new, 25,000-square-foot facility in Oxford, Massachusetts, and the move quickly became a catalyst for the company's growth and production. In order to stay on the cutting edge of Swiss technology, Swissturn usually trades up its machines every 10 years. The move allowed Swissturn to completely reconfigure the space and organize the shop's machines by teams to maximize employee communication and productivity. Now, the shop consists of information systems, such as message board systems and self-directed work teams that facilitate easier internal communication.

"What we've done is driven responsibility down to the floor level, so they can respond quicker," Mr. Mandile

says. "Information flows better when it's not going through a hierarchy of administration, and productivity has increased dramatically."

Swissturn's facility makeover is just one of many ways the company increases the productivity and well-being of its employees. In addition to investing in customers, Swissturn is always seeking new ways to develop its employees through increased responsibility and continuous job training to ensure its staff is up to date on all aspects of machining technology, quality systems and regulatory requirements. Currently, the company is 30-percent employee-owned, but Mr. Mandile says the company plans to one day make it 100-percent employee owned, as part of its philosophy of investing in its employees.

"Working in manufacturing now is more than just hands-on, and there is a much higher level of technology and skills required to be successful," Mr. Mandile says. "We're constantly changing, and we don't want to stagnate. Things change quickly, and if we're not taking advantage of them, our competitors will."

Investing in the local community is also largely important for Swissturn. Each month, the company helps out a local food pantry by offering its trucking service. Swissturn also participated in National Manufacturing Day by working with schools to promote STEM careers and give manufacturing jobs and facilities a positive image.

"Even people who are familiar with shops are surprised when they see ours because it is so clean and organized," Mr. Mandile says. "Even I'm surprised by what it looks like sometimes, because I know where we came from. I remember a time when we had practically dirt floors and broken windows."

As PMPA members, Swissturn gets much of its value from attending technical conferences and utilizing the organization's listserves, where Mandile and his staff can stay up to date on the latest industry topics and sales trends.

"PMPA is so great if you want to stay connected with your peers in the industry," Mr. Mandile says. "We don't have that cut-throat attitude. PMPA tends to consist of a lot of small- and medium-sized companies with the same issues, so we have a lot to learn from each other."

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