



Member Profile:

Great Lakes Automation Services, Inc.

Great Lakes Automation Services, Inc. (GLASi) was established just ten years ago, but its roots go back much farther. The company's Clifton Machining Division, formerly known as Clifton Automatic, was founded in 1938 by Harry Clifton and purchased in 1973 by the Podufal family. Today, Joe Podufal is president of the division.

The parent company, GLASi, was founded by Ken Fisher, Mark Fatica and Bryan Brooks, who had previously worked together at DT Industries and Assembly Machines, Inc. (AMi). Those businesses produced automated assembly and test machinery.

After leaving their previous employer and starting the new company, the three principals worked out of their homes to solicit new business. Within a few years, they bought AMi and hired many of that company's design engineers and machine builders.

Because Mr. Fisher is a disabled U.S. military veteran and owns more than half of the company, GLASi secured classification as a service-disabled, veteran-owned, small business (SDVOSB). That meant the opportunity to solicit business from companies that are prime contractors to the United States government.

"I knocked on a lot of doors and went to a lot of job fairs," Mr. Fisher says. "Eventually, we started quoting on work for government contractors. It started out small and continued to grow. As we got more



government work, people asked us if we do any screw machining. That led us to looking into the precision machining market."

"Clifton Automatic was a customer for our assembly work," Mr. Fatica adds. "It was a perfect fit for us, so we bought part of the company from Joe Podufal. With the purchase, we can now offer our customers even more services through the three main divisions: automated assembly and test equipment; packaging and kitting; and precision machining." The company also recently started a fourth division—Great Lakes Auto Nation—to offer muscle car restoration services.

"The automated side of the business was doing very well," he continues. "It allowed us to invest in new equipment for the machining side. We bought new Swiss machines to make parts used in the defense, automotive, medical and electrical industries. We also achieved ISO 9001:2000 certification."

"With the Clifton division, GLASi was also able to win more machining contracts from government suppliers," Mr. Podufal says. "That includes military contracts. We meet all of the required military specifications."

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A long time PMPA member, Mr. Podufal has been on the association's Marketing Committee for the past 15 years. He was also recently named to the PMPA's board of directors.

"The PMPA provides great networking opportunities," Mr. Podufal says. "Not only has membership been good for our machining business, but we're also seeing more interest in our automated assembly and inspection services.

"The PMPA gives me the chance to meet with everyone in the association, from the business owners to the shop managers," he continues. "Not only do we share ideas, but we also share work."

Mr. Podufal points out that if there's a part that he can't make at his facility, he will send it to a fellow PMPA member who can produce it. GLASi will then inspect the part, add value to it through secondary services and deliver it to the customer.

"A lot of that goes on in the association, Mr. Podufal adds. "PMPA members are not dog-eat-dog. They don't take jobs and employees from the other members. We actually give work to each other.

"I'm very pro-U.S. manufacturing," Mr. Podufal explains. "If I can help keep manufacturing work in the United States and create jobs here, I will do it. Sharing work with other PMPA members helps us

do that. It brings machining work back here from overseas."

Mr. Podufal believes the Listserve is one of the PMPA's biggest benefits. "It's a great tool," he says. "All 420-plus members can get on the Listserve. If someone has a question on technical, management or human resources, they can get an answer—or even 20 answers—within ten minutes."

He attends meetings such as the PMPA Management Update Conference and the PMPA Annual Meeting. "The speakers they bring in are perfect for the PMPA audience," Mr. Podufal emphasizes. "One talked about re-shoring and how it's worth it to bring machining work back to the United States. Another speaker talked about demographics and what markets members should be targeting as the population gets older. Very informative.

"We also take technical people from our company to the PMPA Technical Conference," Mr. Podufal adds. "There, they learn about specific jobs and how other manufacturers do things. A competitor might show me how to make a part two or three seconds faster. There's a lot of sharing ideas like that. That's what the PMPA is all about."

Great Lakes Automation Services, Inc./AMi is located at 8835 Walmer Drive, McKean, Penn. 16426. Phone: 814-476-7710. Fax: 814-476-7730. Web site: glasi.us.

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Recent PMPA Listserve Topics

PMPA members use email Listserves to share ideas, solve problems, sell excess material and equipment, and learn about new business opportunities. Here is a list of topics that were recently discussed:

- Predictive Index or equivalent
- Health insurance
- Short-term disability
- Payroll systems
- ITAR
- iPads in shop environment
- Computer timers for stretching
- Threaded bar stock
- Chip handling
- Lipé bar feeder liner
- Oil in Swiss-type machine
- Small boring problem
- C110 copper
- Worm gears
- Question on rolling 2-56 thread
- 1215 vs. 12L14 steel

PMPA CALENDAR

Below is the calendar of upcoming conferences and events scheduled for the 2012 program year. For the latest district/chapter meeting information, please view the Calendar of Events at pmpa.org/calendar/. If you have questions about PMPA conferences or regional meetings, please contact Rob Kiener, Director of Government Affairs & Communications: 440-526-0300 or rkiener@pmpa.org.

PMPA Management Update Conference
February 24-26, 2012
The Hyatt Regency La Jolla, San Diego, Calif.

PMPA National Technical Conference
April 21-24, 2012
The Westin North Shore, Wheeling, Ill.



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