



Technical Member Profile:

Lester Detterbeck Enterprises, Ltd.

In the precision machining industry, the Detterbeck name goes back to the days of overhead belt-drive screw machines. Lester Detterbeck Enterprises, Ltd. (LDE) has been a leading designer and manufacturer of screw machine cams for more than 100 years.

Today, with the fifth generation of the family now working for the company, the Detterbeck name continues to be an industry force. In 2000, LDE purchased the Boyar-Schultz-SMT tool holder line. And, in November 2010, the company acquired B&S (Brown & Sharpe) Machine Services, another iconic name in the industry.

“We were a very good match for B&S Machine Services because we know the equipment,” says company president, John Detterbeck, the fourth generation of the family-owned-and-operated manufacturer. “It’s surprising how many Brown & Sharpe machines are still being used every day. Our B&S division continues to make cams and replacement parts for those machines because there is still a high demand.

“To complement that business, we design and build special cutting tools of all types,” he continues. “We build components for both the Boyar-Schultz and the Brown & Sharpe tool holder lines. We’re doing a lot of manufacturing in an era where manufacturing isn’t supposed to be as viable. LDE is one of the companies that continues to prove that thinking wrong.”



LDE’s manufacturing operations are located in a 27,000-square-foot facility in Iron River, Michigan in that state’s Upper Peninsula. There, the company’s cams are produced on custom-built equipment to exacting standards. LDE also manufactures special tooling, end-working tools, dovetail blanks and tool holders.

In addition to being known for cams, the Detterbeck name is synonymous with the cam design training courses instituted by former company president, Lester G. Detterbeck, Sr. He had a passion for helping people learn about the machines that were his life. His quest to educate the industry continues to this day through the efforts of his descendants.

Every year, LDE representatives are called upon to be featured speakers at local and national

industry meetings. “We give presentations on topics such as how to design cutting tools or how to resharpen a specific tool,” says John Detterbeck.

As one of the industry’s authorities on the use and construction of special cutting tools, Mr. Detterbeck has been a presenter at numerous PMPA national and district meetings. He is a member of the PMPA Board of Directors and has served on several association committees. His company has received PMPA’s Technical Service Award a record 11 times for providing training and information.

This year marks LDE’s 50th as a PMPA technical member. “The PMPA does a fabulous job highlighting topics for which people need information,” Mr. Detterbeck points out. “The association finds

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the individuals who have the highest understanding of those topics and then brings them in to do presentations.”

Like other technical members, Mr. Detterbeck is constantly being called upon as an information resource. “Whether it’s giving presentations at meetings or providing information on the Listserve, we share what we know,” he says. “The demands on the industry have changed a lot over the years, but the core still involves the transfer of information.

“You don’t see competitors sharing information at a lot of other associations,” he adds. “But the PMPA has always been a group with a strong rapport. People are willing to share. They are willing to go the extra mile to help other members.

“It’s through that sharing that PMPA members become the best at what they do,” Mr. Detterbeck emphasizes. “It’s because they’re

constantly being reinforced by the best. They’re rubbing elbows with the leaders in the industry. And that just makes each member company better.

“When a PMPA member is not quite sure how to run a particular part, he or she can quickly find people that have already run the same part and have done it successfully,” he says. “Or, members can find those who know the pitfalls of a job and what to stay away from.

“The part I find most interesting is the questions that come from some of the newer members,” Mr. Detterbeck says. “They might have the most modern equipment, but they don’t know how to apply a certain operation. There are times when I go back to my grandfather’s notes and find answers that apply as well today as they did 40 or 50 years ago. Even though technology is continually changing, there are components of it that tend to stay the same.”

Mr. Detterbeck encourages those in the precision machining industry to join the PMPA. “If companies really have a desire to succeed, I don’t know why they wouldn’t want to belong. The association offers so much. At the National Technical Conference, members have the opportunity to network with hundreds of their peers and talk about any number of subjects.

“They can discuss sample prints, learn about the latest equipment or come away with new ideas,” he explains. “They can get answers to questions like how to solve a particular problem or what’s needed to make a skive tool work. Through the PMPA, they can always find somebody who knows the answers.”

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Why Join
PMPA?

GROW!

To grow and profit today, you have to work smarter. You have to relentlessly eliminate waste. PMPA is the way to expand your knowledge and increase your capabilities in order to grow your business. Through daily interaction with PMPA staff members, you have access to our expertise on important industry issues. You’re also able to tap the collective knowledge of your peers; those who have “been there” and “done that.”

Through the meetings, resources and online connections, reports and more, we give you the tools to grow. We look at emerging markets and let you know what’s hot and what’s not. PMPA programs help you understand your markets so you can make sense of the issues. And, we provide relevant information to help you make informed decisions.