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COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

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Partnering with the Alabama Technology Network (ATN) and its centers at Auburn University and Rainsville, Ala., the small precision machining and fabrication operation is among some 15 Alabama companies who took advantage of a three-year training grant -- administered through the AU-ATN center -- to assist suppliers to The Boeing Company.



ATN centers help machining firm attain AS 9100

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Founded in 1970, Marshall Precision still is a small job shop. Its seven skilled employees turn out hundreds of specialty precision parts annually to not only the aerospace industry and clients such



ATN representatives join with Marshall Precision employees to present the company with its recognition banner for attaining AS 9100 certification. The Guntersville, Ala. machining operation attained the quality certification under a three-year training program for Boeing suppliers. The Auburn Technical Assistance Center, represented by Director Henry Burdg, third from right, and the Rainsville, Ala. ATN center, represented by Chris Anderson, left, facilitated the program.

as Boeing and NASA, but also to other industrial sectors and to clients such as Disney and various automotive parts manufacturers.

Although the present economic downturn is affecting Marshall's business volume, achieving AS 9100 certification is helping the firm to retain work that it

would otherwise likely have lost, company officials say.

"Although we are not producing a large number of orders at the present time, without this certification we would have been removed from the supplier list altogether," said Marshall's President Wayne Barnard. "Without question, once the economy turns around, we will be more competitive than we were."

Moreover, Barnard says they have been able to retain jobs.

"We have cut back on production due to the economic downturn, but we have not had to cut jobs," Barnard said. "Without the AS 9100 certification, we would have lost two positions."

Marshall credits the achievement with creating other beneficial impacts.

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The firm has invested \$29,700 directly into improving employee skills and knowledge as a result of the training grant; has recorded labor cost reductions and other overhead savings of some \$5,000; and has avoided unnecessary investments that otherwise would have been made of at least \$500 over the past 12 months through better equipment maintenance practices.

AS 9100 is the quality measurement standard for the aerospace industry. Criteria are based on the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards; however, the International Aerospace Standard (AS 9100) includes some 80 certification measures over and above the ISO certification process for other types of manufacturing.

ATN worked with Marshall for about a year to build its quality system and to get the firm ready to undergo the AS 9100 auditing and certification process.

“They already were a compliant company and had a lot of the pieces in place to ensure a good quality system,” said Chris Anderson of the Rainsville ATN center. “By standardizing and creating flexibility, we were able to incorporate much of their existing system. The real task was to ensure that it met AS 9100 audit criteria through employee training and development.”

The Alabama-Boeing Supplier Development Program was funded by Alabama’s Office of Workforce Development – a grant providing matching funds to qualified Boeing suppliers for workforce development training in existing industries. As a pilot project to the aerospace industry

sector, it provided a \$250,000-per-year source of support for a three-year cycle through which Boeing partnered with state and local agencies to deliver continuous improvement and quality system training to its supplier base.

“We helped to conceive this training grant and served as the ATN’s administrative center for its activities,” said Henry Burd, director of the AU-ATN center. “Over its three-year cycle, the program provided assistance to some 15 different firms through more than 18 separate training projects. More than 767 employees were trained, and economic impacts reported by participating

companies indicate that the state’s initial investment multiplied 65.7 times through increased product sales, retained sales, job retention and creation, and the ability for participating companies to reduce costs and overhead.”



Impact Summary

Marshall Precision Manufacturing Inc. credits ATN with enabling the following economic and business impacts through its training and assistance:

Investments

- \$29,700 in workforce development

Job Retention & Job Creation

- Retained two positions and prevented need for layoffs in other areas

Cost Savings

- \$5,000 in labor cost reductions
- \$500 in avoided equipment maintenance expense

Retained Sales

- Prevented the loss of business by enabling the company to remain a viable supplier

Auburn Technical Assistance Center was established in 1976 and is an affiliate of the Alabama Technology Network and an Economic Development Administration University Center. As an Outreach arm of the Auburn University College of Business, ATAC provides business and technical assistance, customized training, and consultation in implementing value-added strategies to manufacturers and other businesses, not-for-profit organizations and government agencies in Alabama and the Southeast. SOAR is an ATAC publication. Direct inquiries and questions to Mitch Emmons, Sr. Outreach Assoc., 334.844.3881, emmonmb@auburn.edu.

Auburn Technical Assistance Center

147 Lowder Business Building
Auburn, AL 36849-5350
1-800-446-0386
(334) 844-4659
www.AuburnWorks.org

