



An ATAC Client Success Story



AUBURN

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



Patterson Machine Inc. employees join with Boeing officials and representatives of the Auburn Technical Assistance Center (ATAC) in celebration of the company's recent *AS 9100* certification achievement. The Union Grove, Ala. firm completed the stringent *AS 9100* certification requirements in only eight months, and thus, is among an elite lineup of small company suppliers to The Boeing Company. ATAC -- an Auburn University College of Business Outreach program and an affiliate of the Alabama Technology Network (ATN) -- partnered with Patterson Machine to facilitate and guide the company through the certification process.

Union Grove firm achieves AS 9100 certification

Being able to compete among the giants is a major challenge for many small businesses operating in today's volatile manufacturing environment, but Patterson Machine Inc. (PMI) of Union Grove, Ala. has become a contender by achieving *AS 9100* certification.

Partnering with Auburn Technical Assistance Center (ATAC) in Auburn University's College of Business Outreach program, PMI attained *AS 9100* certification in only eight months,

and thus, is among an elite lineup of small company suppliers to aerospace manufacturing mammoth Boeing.

The Boeing Company relies on a cadre' of suppliers to produce and deliver thousands of specialty parts for its aircraft and defense-related products. Supply chain management is a critically important and complex process.

"Our customers require that we have and adhere to the requirements of an approved quality management system to ensure that we produce and deliver a safe product" said Boeing Supplier Manager Brad Bruce. "These standards tie together all of the things we do -- from design through delivery -- to ensure customer satisfaction and a safe, quality product."

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.

A family-owned business employing some 20 machinists and office personnel, PMI specializes in close tolerance precision machining, fixtures, sheet metal fabrication and assembly for the commercial, medical, and flight hardware industries. Company officials knew that to remain competitive in the aerospace sector, PMI had to achieve and meet the rigorous quality standards that govern the industry.

"We learned of the assistance available through the ATAC while attending a seminar in 2006," said



PMI Owner Roy Patterson. “We approached ATAC and through a process of evaluating our needs and desires, ATAC worked with us to design, implement and facilitate a program that guided and enabled us to make the necessary improvements in our operation and to establish the level of quality management that qualified us for *AS 9100* certification.”

Patterson said that simply going through the certification process resulted in estimated cost savings more than \$30,000 in such areas as labor saving measures, reduced energy consumption and lower overhead. Moreover, *AS 9100* certification has opened the doors to potentially a million more dollars in annual business that the company would not otherwise be able to obtain.

“We’ve not only found that *AS 9100* certification has enabled us to be a preferred Boeing supplier, but it also has opened the doors to us among other large companies in the aerospace sector who rely on and utilize small business suppliers,” Patterson said.

Small *AS 9100* certified firms also know that strength comes in numbers and diversity, and use their qualifications to their advantage.

“We also have enhanced our competitiveness by joining with other small *AS 9100* companies in other states to form teams that can provide broader service capabilities,” Patterson added. “This enables us to bid on and know that we can deliver large-volume, multi-assembly component contracts.”

This teaming approach is encouraged by companies like Boeing.

“Quality is built into everything that we do, from our job qualifications, engineering and design, production – all elements of our work,” Bruce said. “At the Boeing Company, we know that diversity brings strength, innovation and flexibility to our supply base. As Boeing increasingly focuses on its core competencies in high-end design, engineering and systems integration, we need suppliers that are highly focused on their own core competencies, continually striving to create additional value in everything they do.”

PMI’s eight-month success in attaining *AS 9100* certification is considered a fast-track approach to a process that typically takes a year or more to complete. As grueling as it was, Patterson said he would recommend it to others.

“We spent a lot of hours on training, program improvement and auditing our process,” Patterson said. “It challenged our employees to be attentive to customer service and to develop ways to improve quality. To cultivate this kind of thinking among your employees is necessary and vital to staying in business.”



Roy Patterson III, third from left, is shown with Boeing and ATAC officials who recently joined his company -- Patterson Machine Inc. of Union Grove, Ala. -- to recognize the firm’s certification as an *AS 9100* company. With Patterson, from left, are Boeing Supplier Manager Brad Bruce, ATAC Director Henry Burdg, and Boeing Procurement Agent Steve Scott.

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 arm of the Auburn University College of Business Outreach program, 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.

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