

Retaining and growing business through ISO 9001 certification

By Rich Rovito
Industry Reporter



WISCONSIN MANUFACTURING
EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Faced with an extremely challenging deadline to implement corrective actions or risk losing a major customer, Andres Thermal Coating and Machine Inc. (ATCAM) turned to the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership for assistance.

The challenge for the Little Chute manufacturer began after a third-party audit was conducted for a large aerospace OEM. ATCAM provides thermal coating for a local fabricator that supplies the OEM.

The auditor identified several areas that needed to be addressed to conform to ISO 9001 and AS9100 standards. At that point, ATCAM had one month to respond to the OEM with corrective actions, otherwise the OEM would direct the fabricator to another supplier of the thermal coating process.

ATCAM engaged the WMEP to rapidly develop the necessary documentation and respond to the corrective actions.

“We had been doing a lot of it all along but the documentation just wasn’t there,” said Michael Bultman, vice president at ATCAM. “We thought we had a little bit of time but we ended up only having four weeks to produce a quality manual and implement a whole lot of procedures. We needed to do something. We were pretty much told that if we didn’t comply we’d be dropped as a supplier.”



ATCAM soon realized that with ISO certification there were additional opportunities to manufacture more components for some existing customers and to get into other markets

The matter generated a sense of urgency for ATCAM, which wanted to retain the business.

“The WMEP came in right away and was very clear about what needed to be done,” said ATCAM president and owner Peter Andres, who founded the company in 1993. “We are able to complete the task per the customer’s request.”

In July 2014, after reviewing the corrective actions, the OEM certified ATCAM as an approved supplier for a three-year period.

The WMEP also assisted ATCAM with an ISO 9001 gap analysis and implementation of an ISO 9001 Quality Management System.

ATCAM received its ISO 9001 certificate in October 2015.

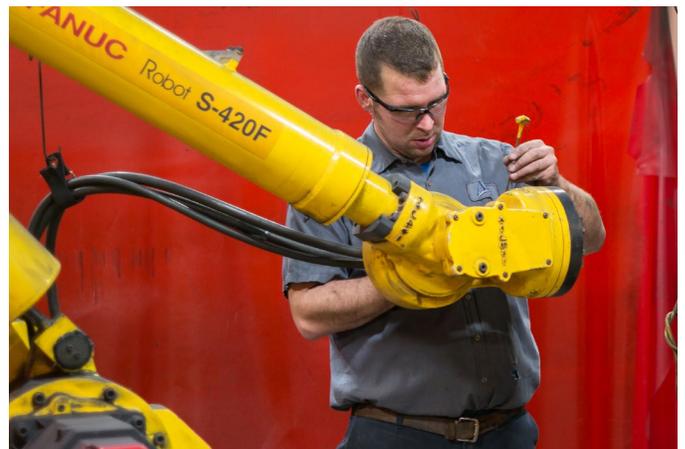
“ATCAM has retained significant revenue that would have been lost had the OEM pulled its business,” said Andy Porter, manufacturing specialist for the WMEP. “ATCAM also has adopted practices to instill more discipline in the organization.”



Andy Porter, WMEP Manufacturing Specialist
with Michael Bultman, ATCAM Vice President

When the process began, ATCAM was reluctant to pursue certification due to the tight time frame.

“The WMEP makes the process less painful than trying to do something like this on your own,” Andres said. “The WMEP also made us realize that it’s not an impossible task, even for a small company like ATCAM.”



ATCAM soon realized that with ISO certification there were additional opportunities to manufacture more components for some existing customers and to get into other markets, he said.



There is some automotive sector work and other defense projects that ATCAM “couldn’t even entertain without the certification,” Andres said.

The process has created more discipline throughout the organization, Bultman added.

“The procedures were never documented. Now we have hard numbers for performance and rework and everything else,” Bultman said. “It keeps us up to speed on the actual operations of the business that we never had before.”



“We have the ability to turn work around quickly,” Bultman said

Through this program, ATCAM has incorporated ISO 9001 into its system, allowing it to keep an important customer and strengthen that relationship.

“Now everybody is on track and forward thinking about how to do things better,” Andres said. “It’s a high credential that will help us to gain new customers and now that we’re certified, the sky’s the limit.”

The projects have resulted in \$150,000 in retained sales over past two years that would have been lost if the OEM had pulled business, along with \$16,700 in cost savings and \$4,500 invested in workforce practices.

ATCAM operates its lone manufacturing facility in Little Chute. The company has 10 employees, including six on the shop floor. After three additions, its plant covers 35,000 square feet. The company owns adjacent property that would allow the plant to double its current size.



ATCAM provides thermal spray, machining and robotic applied coating services. The company produced record results in 2015, with year-over-year sales growth of about 20 percent.

“We have the ability to turn work around quickly,” Bultman said. “A big driving force of our business is repair work.”

Food processing, pulp and paper, plastic packaging, and the military/defense markets are among those served by ATCAM. Customers include Oshkosh Corp. and large paper producers in the Fox Valley region.

ATCAM’s diversification of services and customers allowed the company to thrive, even in the depths of the recession a few years ago.

“We were extremely fortunate in 2008 when we saw the recession hit. We were virtually unaffected,” Andres said.

Business has remained strong since that time, he added.

