



Alpha Manufacturing Co. Positions Itself for New Business by Obtaining ISO 9001:2008 Certification



Company Profile and Situation

Alpha Manufacturing Co. is a precision machine shop in West Columbia, S.C. Established in 1973 to service the bearing industry, Alpha has transformed over three decades to service a number of sectors including aerospace, defense, nuclear, engineering and construction.

Today, Alpha is a woman-owned company managed by President and CEO Pat Young and her husband and General Manager, Dean. With 15,000 square feet of manufacturing space and 20 employees, the machine shop has a variety of capabilities including precision grinding, Wire EDM and EDM hole drilling, CNC and manual milling, surface grinding, and CNC and manual turning. Alpha's customers employ the company for engineering and design work, finished products and machine work. Lockheed Martin retains Alpha as a STAR Supplier for its F-16, C-130 and F-35 aircraft programs; meaning that when Alpha's components arrive at Lockheed, the parts go directly to the production line without inspection.

Alpha approached SCMEP in 2008 looking for information about ISO 9001:2008 Certification. The company was looking to increase business with larger customers but was finding it difficult.

"There are so many customers out there who would ask if we were ISO certified. And when we said no, they said they couldn't talk to us," Dean Young says.

"Today, it's not a dog-eat-dog economy, but a tiger-eat-tiger economy," says Jimmy Walters, Alpha's Quality Control Manager. "We wanted to get ahead of the curve because as time develops, more companies will be forced into ISO and other types of certifications."

Solution

SCMEP provided ISO 9001:2008 training and consulting to Alpha through its ISO 9001 Jumpstart Program early in 2009. "We can take a company without any formal Quality Management System in place and have a fully compliant ISO program in just a few months," says Tim Sinclair, an SCMEP regional vice-president. "When we leave their facility, they have a fully documented and ISO compliant system."

SCMEP brought in ISO specialist Carol Robinson of Pillar Management Associates to lead the JumpStart project. She spent nine days on-site providing training and guidance to help Alpha. The JumpStart program follows a proven step-by-step process that trains all involved personnel in the ISO 9001 standard while also creating a fully documented system. For Alpha, it was a cinch. "(SCMEP) made it very easy for us, and Carol was very straightforward and she made it interesting," Dean Young says. "For anyone who's going through the process, I would highly recommend SCMEP and Pillar Management."

Results

By going through the ISO JumpStart Program, Alpha was fully certified in just a few short months. Following the on-site training and consulting, an independent audit agency must certify and award ISO 9001 registration. Alpha passed with flying colors and it is already bearing fruit. They have seen an uptick in interest from potential clients. "We love the certification ISO 9001:2008 because it has opened the door to some new customers," Dean Young says. Expectations will only rise once the economy recovers. "We're just six months into this, really," Dean Young says. "Down the road a couple of years from now, I'm sure that ISO will benefit us greatly."

ISO certification remains a key measure to ensure top quality. "If you're doing two quotes between two people," says Walters, "and one was ISO certified and the other wasn't -- with the pricing being competitive -- most companies will go to the ISO company because they are certified. With ISO, it just raised the confidence level."

When working with clients, SCMEP believes all projects must produce measureable outcomes. "SCMEP has a variety of people with varying experience in manufacturing that can provide help," Dean Young says. "They're experts you can lean on."