

Learning to be the best

Monday, February 04, 2008 - MiBiz

Education takes Alliant Engineering to new profit centers

By Lisa Mackinder | MiBiz

lmackinder@mibiz.com

KALAMAZOO – **Alliant Engineering's** secret of success is as easy as three Fs – fast, fluid and flexible. Education helps too.

The company's adherence to the three Fs, according to Alliant Vice President Randy Newsome, best explains how Alliant has successfully expanded its service offerings over the years.

"We're small enough that we can do things without having to go through a big corporate structure," he told *MiBiz*. "If it makes sense to offer products or services, then we will do it."

An innovative supplier of product development services, engineering services, staffing services and contract manufacturing, Kalamazoo-based Alliant recently received a grant from the state of Michigan worth more than \$12,000 for employee training. Funding stems from the Michigan Works Employee Enhancement Program. According to Newsome, the M-TEC at Kalamazoo Valley Community College alerted Alliant to this opportunity.

The grant will allow Alliant to speed things up – adding employees and providing training in ANSYS, Solidworks and Moldflow in a quicker timeframe. The company already has seven people lined up for that training. Alliant will focus on areas currently staffed with one expert.

"We can cross-train people and that make us more flexible," Newsome said.

Alliant principle Jim Medsker started the company in 1998. Since that time it has experienced considerable growth in service offerings. First and foremost, said Newsome, Alliant is a product development company. But other services provided include product design, analysis, testing, reverse engineering and training. It has also branched into staffing. Alliant recruits engineers and designers for direct and contract placements with companies. It also keeps itself in touch with area talent. Over the years, Alliant has provided companies like Parker HSD, Stryker, Mann+Hummel, TG Systems and Borg Warner with contract placement services for technical, design and engineering services.

The wide range of services, he said, makes Alliant stand out in the industry.

"Most consulting firms are very narrow in scope," Newsome said, adding that the company's fast, fluid and flexible approach also gives it an advantage, saying it is this by which it "lives and breathes."

A separate division of Alliant, Keystone Product Development – focused primarily on medical device development and manufacturing – provides clients with development, supply chain management and contract manufacturing services. According to Newsome, the presence of Alliant principle Mike Zamora "opens the door to get into medical manufacturing." Zamora has a manufacturing and product development background

and previously worked for an area company that provided industrial design and manufacturing for Stryker.

Newsome said Alliant already has products on the table. Production is expected to begin by early fourth quarter of this year. Projects have not been fully developed yet, but Newsome described the products as a broad range of electro-mechanical devices.

As the company delves further into medical device manufacturing, the grant from Michigan Works will help with training. According to Newsome, employees will have to be well versed in ISO 13485 and FDA design controls. The grant helped shorten cycle time for training. This increases Alliant's ability to grow.

Currently, the company has 15 employees and primarily services the West Michigan market, including Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids and Battle Creek. It has served the automotive, aerospace and specialty products industries. Some of Alliant's clients include John Deere, Steelcase, Eaton Truck Components, Eaton Aerospace, Eaton Torque Control and Johnson Controls.

Newsome believes education and training are just as important at the state level, providing an opportunity to draw Michigan out of what some call a one-state recession. Two things, in his opinion, will make the state stand apart – training and attitude. Michigan needs people with technical abilities. In Newsome's estimation, that will require all local colleges, universities and business entities working together. He also feels a change in attitude needs to take place.

"Companies like ours – the smaller companies – drive the state," Newsome said.

MiBiz Network

<http://www.mibiz.com/>

Please read the following information if you are interested in publishing a MiBiz article on your Web site. The following verbage must be included on your site with the article:

COPYRIGHT 2007. MIBIZ.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

This article appeared in the **Monday, February 04, 2008** issue of MiBiz, read by upper management executives in West and Southwest Michigan. Print subscriptions are free to qualified individuals who are employed in West and Southwest Michigan. For further information about MiBiz, visit www.mibiz.com. (A link to MiBiz's Web site is required).

PLEASE NOTE: Since MiBiz retains the copyright for the article, it must be published AS IS, with no revisions unless you receive permission from the publisher.