

Keystone: Building a better surgical tool

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KALAMAZOO — The key to building a better surgical tool is listening.

Listen to surgeons long enough, and you'll happen upon the genesis of many surgical ideas — a problem that requires an innovative solution to cut down on operating room time.

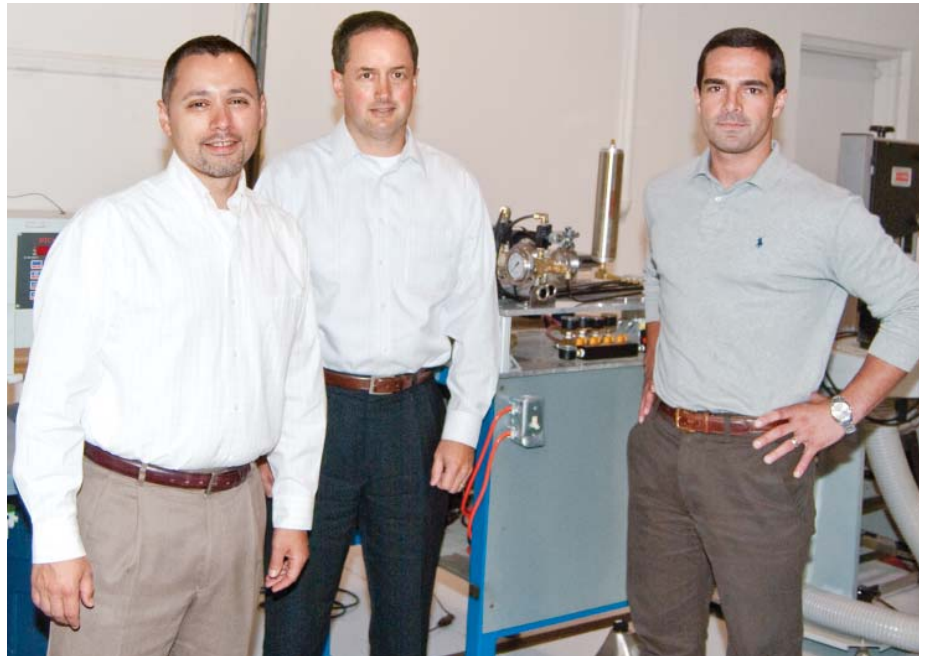
Just ask Adam Keilen, cofounder of **Keystone Surgical**. As surgeons look to improve patient outcomes, one area has been somewhat overlooked: efficiency. If form follows function, Keystone is hoping to change how surgeons and physicians care for patients by giving them tools that speed their work in the operating room.

As hospitals and healthcare providers deal with the changed fiscal landscape for hospitals, better tools and medical devices can help improve outcomes and hospitals' bottom line, Keilen explained.

"We are not looking at changing how they do procedures, we are focusing on modifying what they are capable of doing with the products," Keilen told *LabWork*. "We are not doing another hip or knee, we are helping the turnover time, giving improved outcomes and reducing the time in the operating room. We want to be taking the things they do and finding more efficient means to do that."

Keystone Surgical is a joint venture between Keilen, Michael Zamora and James Medsker, principals of **Keystone Solutions Group**, which is comprised of **Keystone Product Development**, a full-service engineering and rapid prototyping firm, and **Keystone Manufacturing**. Zamora and Medsker bring the engineering and prototyping know-how, while Keilen brings 12 years experience in medical device marketing and sales.

Keystone Solutions, with approximately \$10 million in annual sales, employs 20 people and does work in product development in the automotive, aerospace and defense industries, developing and testing products such as hydraulic systems for aircraft landing gear. The group had worked in healthcare, but had not developed its own products until a year ago, when Keilen began looking for a manufacturing partner for a line of orthopedic accessories he was developing.



Kalamazoo-based Keystone Surgical founders Michael Zamora, James Medsker, and Adam Keilen are pursuing an aggressive product development timeline. PHOTO: NATHAN PECK

Keilen worked with **Southwest Michigan First** to find a company with the right mix of engineering experience and manufacturing ability to manufacture the products.

"All the right tools were in place," Keilen said.

As the discussions progressed, the trio realized there were greater opportunities beyond a product development agreement, and Keystone Surgical began to take shape.

"We were finding that a lot of our skills complement each other," Zamora said. "We realized we wanted to produce a steady stream of products for our own sales force."

With orthopedic and medical device manufacturing giant **Stryker Corp.** just down the road, Keystone Surgical looks to an aggressive timeline of product launches to drive sales for the year-old company. Standing inside the research and development lab of their Kalamazoo headquarters that is two parts high-tech manufacturing and one part garage, the trio expects to roll out new products approximately every six months.

Standing between an axle for a heavy-duty military truck and the machine

used for testing extractors for orthopedic surgeons, Medsker said the company can find and move products to market more quickly than larger corporations.

"We are looking to grow the company by providing innovative solutions that are cost-effective and reduce operating room time," Medsker said.

Take one of the Kalamazoo company's first products, Ortho+Track, a measuring tape with gradations printed in ink that is visible under an X-ray image intensifier or C-arm. The adhesive tape is useful for orthopedic surgeons who can affix the tape to a patient in order to check the desired depth of interventions such as inserting stabilizing pins while in surgery.

Keystone Surgical is currently hiring its sales force and will have 50 sales representatives hired by August. The sales force will provide both a market for their products, as well as the source for new innovations.

"When the customer comes to us and explains how something could work for them, we develop it and bring it to market — that is really cool," Keilen said. **LW**