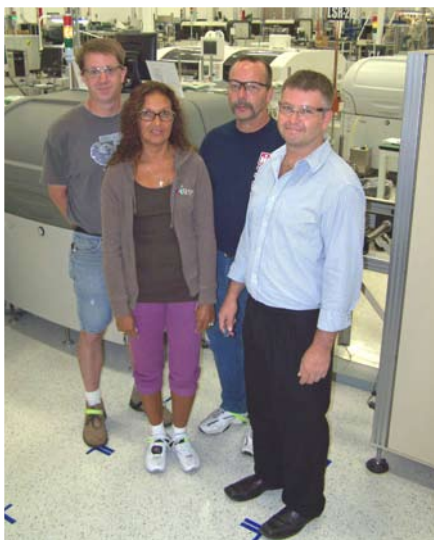


# Entrepreneurial Spirit Prevails at GHSP



A few of the GHSP employees who received training to support the company's new operations include (L - R) Tom Jacoby, with GHSP 16 years; Elba Holtzclaw, with GHSP 13 years; Dan Hanis, with GHSP 20 years; and Brian Klont, with GHSP 14 years.

The word “entrepreneur” isn’t usually associated with an 86-year-old business; however, if the definition of entrepreneurship is “to organize and manage any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk”, then GHSP certainly fits the bill. For decades, this Grand Haven manufacturer was primarily a stamping operation before moving into the production of mechanical shift systems for the automotive industry more than 50 years ago. But as cars became less mechanical and more electrical, automotive suppliers had to develop the capability to integrate mechanical and elec-

tronic disciplines. The blending of these disciplines is now known as “mechatronics”, and it is this trend that moved GHSP to redefine their business model, including the products and industries they would work with in the future.

“About three years ago we made the conscious decision to embrace mechatronics,” said GHSP President and CEO Paul Doyle. “Mechatronics is a leading trend in a number of industries, but we decided to concentrate on what we already knew – surface transportation. We also made the decision to do fewer things, but do those things really well.” The company is now focused on three product lines: automotive shift systems, electronic controls and smart actuators - devices that monitor systems and activate other systems to maximize performance. GHSP’s customers now include not only automotive, but appliance and high-end LED lighting manufacturers.

This new business model had major implications for GHSP’s workforce and internal systems. They went through an intensive 5-month period where the stamping operation ended and manufacturing became much more geared toward electronics. An electronics manufacturing center in Troy, Michigan was moved to Grand Haven to allow all electronic and mechanical assemblies to flow from one location. Grand Haven employees had to be trained in many new skills to support the

new operations, including electronic processing as well as new quality and aesthetic aspects of mechatronics. Internally, departments like accounting, IT, human resources and purchasing also had to learn to support three different product lines instead of just one.

So far, GHSP’s new focus is paying off. Despite the recession, the company was awarded more than \$100 million in new business last year, beating the previous record by a wide margin. More than 20% of this new business is outside the shift systems product line. A plant opened in China six years ago to service the Chinese market now employs around 300 people, and GHSP’s operation in Mexico, started in 2008, is scheduled to expand later this year. Total GHSP employment now totals approximately 850 people.

“One of the biggest things we’ve learned through all this is how important it is to stay humble,” Doyle said. “Success lies not in what you think you do well; it lies in what your customers think you do well. Another piece of advice I would give to a business looking at any major reorganization is to make sure every employee is informed and aligned with your new direction. Open communication and employee involvement in the process of change are key. It’s the only way they can fully understand and support the vision for your organization.”

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