

Acquisition broadens niche for family's machine shops

BY JOE IANNARELLI
BUSINESS FIRST

Wayne Mertz has serious plans for Metal Locking Service.

He hopes to exceed \$1 million in sales by the end of the year, is considering expansion and hopes to acquire another company.

"We are matching a mature business with the advantage of the Internet," he said. "It has a well established customer base and today's technology helps us compete globally."

Mertz acquired Metal Locking Service last August. He said the purchase complements his other two businesses, West Metal Works Inc. and Goergen-Mackwirth Co. Inc.

'When customers call they talk to the guys in the shop.'

Matt Gehman
Metal Locking Service

"It's really about maintaining a higher level of customer service and providing an array of options," he said.

Goergen-Mackwirth specializes in sheet metal fabrication, while West Metals is a heavy equipment fabricator. Metal Locking Service does industrial repair for cast iron equipment and machinery, operating as a division of West

Metals.

"Each one fits a certain niche in the industry," Mertz said. "Having all three just made perfect sense."

Mertz is president of both Metal Locking Service and Goergen-Mackwirth. His son-in-law, Matt Gehman, is manager of Metal Locking Service.

"The customers we have are loyal, but it's not as broad of a range as we like it to be," Gehman said. "The Internet and digital technology really helps spread the word."

Potential jobs are quoted via e-mail with the use of digital photography leaving a paperless trail. Metal Locking relies on its digital brochure as an online advertisement.

"When customers call us, they need to get whatever is broken up and running in a timely fashion," Gehman said. "Our online capabilities help us save customers time and money and spreads the word about our efficiency. Word of mouth has turned into word of e-mail."

Gehman said Metal Locking does not rely on its front office management to secure jobs.

"When customers call they talk to the guys in the shop," he said. "That speaks well of the type of people we have working for us. At least two have been with the company for more than 20 years."

Metal Locking is a union shop with

eight employees and three in the front office. Area customers include Cooper Turbocompressor Inc., Washington Mills Electro Minerals Corp. and Buffalo China Inc.

Bob Ruch, assistant service manager with Syracuse Supply Company, a Caterpillar dealership in Tonawanda, has been doing business with Metal Locking Service for some time.

"There's no one else around that can tackle the size of the jobs we give them," he said. "I've never really approached the competition. We have no reason to shop around. Their prices are competitive. I find someone that provides quality results and stay with them."

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