

ForwardFocus

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Spring 2008

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Plus

SNEAK PEEK
Compete Smart 2008

Montana Manufacturing Center

University Technical Assistance Program

Creativity and Automation Solving Worker Shortage

By Deborah Nash, MMEC

Granrud's Lefse Shack has been an important business in the northeastern Montana community of Opheim since its start in 1977. The company manufactures lefse, Norwegian potato bread similar in appearance to a tortilla and a favorite treat when served with butter and sugar. Today, the product is growing in popularity as a wrap as well. It is sold in all 50 states.

The operation is ideal for a rural farm and ranch community. The plant opens at the end of the harvest season, runs four-day, nine-hour shifts and finishes up operations just when spring planting, branding and home gardens need attention starting in mid-April.

A shortage of available workers in Opheim (current population est. 85) for the labor-intensive business is the result of a declining population (Census 2000 est. 111), a phenomenon that is occurring in communities all across the rural West. Granrud's current owners Twyla Anderson and Alice Redfield are trying creative solutions to overcome this shortage and grow their business.

They purchased the business in 2005 from Northern Electric, which had purchased it in 1995 from original owners Evan and Myrt Granrud with the intent of keeping employment opportunities in the community. Anderson and Redfield are of the same mindset as they are also farm and ranch owners with their husbands and had been working as managers in the company under Northern Electric.

A Perfect Match

"We are a perfect match because Alice has worked at 'The Shack' for 21 years and knew everything about the production side. I knew the front office and financials," Anderson said. She joined the company in 1999.

The business has operated in the garage of a house known as The Shack since the beginning, with occasional add-ons by Evan.

"Before we bought the business, we worked with 'The Electric' to see if it was feasible to build a new production building," she said.

"It took a lot of time and energy, but in the end the new facility turned out to be too expensive," Anderson explained. "We just couldn't make it work."

MMEC Field Engineer Dale Detrick helped with the feasibility process, designing a new layout and looking at how to make the manufacturing process flow better and become more efficient. Jim Haider, now MMEC's field engineer for the 32-county WIRED region, also worked on the project as a private consultant.

"If we hadn't gone through the process, we'd still be thinking we could build," Anderson said. "It's really the declining population that will keep us from doing it."

Co-owner Redfield said the cost for a new building took them by surprise, at an estimated \$600,000. "That's a huge amount of debt to carry. Our first reaction was resignation." That soon changed.

Entrepreneurial Approach

Anderson and Redfield have taken an entrepreneurial approach, setting about improving productivity and increasing sales. They continued to work with the Manufacturing Center to explore solutions to the labor issue.

"We sell nationwide and sell everything we make. Now our efforts are put into fine tuning the best that we can to be as efficient as possible," Anderson said.

"The isolation we experience here in Montana is the very driving force that



One operator can now roll lefse on two rolling machines simultaneously. Redfield (one of the owners) is cooking lefse in background.

makes our people so creative," Detrick contends. "Granrud's is a perfect example."

He has continued to work with Granrud's owners for several years to build in efficiencies as part of his service to companies across the entire eastern half of Montana.

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The best ideas... where do they come from?



In the last issue, we discussed the exciting growth of manufacturing in Montana... *Output topped \$8 billion last year... Exports nearly tripled since 2003. More people working! Manufacturing is over 20 percent of Montana's basic economy with \$1.2 billion in worker earnings last year.*

We also discussed some of what's behind the growth ...

entrepreneurial companies *"reinventing the business model, making workforce investments, taking pro-active cost saving measures, tackling new product innovation."*

Let's look deeper at where the **ideas** behind innovation come from. How do we know which markets to tap; how do we know where to invest our time, money, and other resources?

Fuel for ideas is found in many places including issues of this newsletter. Case studies; articles by ground level professionals; and learnings from events like our current Business Growth Seminars (see p. 8). You can also gather stimulus from workshops, professional organizations and conferences.

Often overlooked is a simple plant tour. Simple does not describe the experience accurately... exciting... interesting... Ahhh —Stimulating! Stimulating because much can be learned from our peers. Plant tours offer tangible evidence of creative management of products, processes, and methods that spur company growth.

Business growth expert Doug Hall recommends such experiences, calling them Capitalist Creativity®. He believes you stimulate your mind and imagination by exploring new information, some related, some not. He urges folks to read and discover; channel toward information that drives success. Varied, quality stimulus, he would tell you, creates a chain reaction in the brain, not sitting behind a desk.

We often begin MMEC Advisory Board meetings with plant tours for these very reasons. To give members the opportunity to learn from peers...

to generate new thoughts and ideas... to **energize**. We showcase companies with very different products and business models; plants that we know are continually improving. In May we visited West Paw Design, a creative, high-volume pet beds and pet toys manufacturer, and Scientific Materials, a high-tech crystal growth and laser fabrication leader in the rapidly expanding optoelectronic materials market.

At our subsequent board meeting, members reported on their experience. Let me share some of what we heard:

One observation that was right on, "What we saw is not like Chinese or Asian manufacturing. These companies positioned themselves for quality and consistency; that is every bit as important here as cost savings...."

One small business owner fully expecting to get the most from visiting a high tech company found that "what I can take home to make money with, the pet toy company had it."

Another, "The enthusiasm was just terrific at both; not just what they build but how they do it. I saw systems we can use...and systems that are not complex but really effective. I would like to have brought my whole company."

And this, "Interesting to see how pet toys [manufacturing] applies to trailer manufacturing."

From seeing cultural change to training methods; cost improvement ideas to strategic shifts, each found excitement and energy. I can feel it! You can too...

Plan to attend MMEC's Compete Smart Conference on Oct. 2-3 in Missoula. Plant tours, a feature activity on the first morning, will be rich, rewarding and stimulating. Maybe even **"electrifying."**

Steve Holland, MMEC Director

Doug Hall, America's #1 Idea Guru, to Launch Compete Smart Conference in Missoula Oct. 2-3



One of America's top business thinkers and best-selling authors, Doug Hall, will headline MMEC's two-day Compete Smart Manufacturing Conference on October 2-3, 2008 in Missoula. His luncheon keynote "Made in the USA – Choices for Growth" promises to put PASSION back into your business.

In a high energy, data packed presentation, Hall will review new research on how USA companies can ignite the chain reaction of top-line growth – and avoid the spiral of death.

Hall is best known as one of the judges in the first series of the ABC television show "American Inventor." He is also known for his energetic presentations

and outspoken opinions on marketing and business growth.

As founder of Eureka! Ranch, an innovation think tank, he has spent 25 years creating and developing new ideas and products for national brand companies. His keynote will energize you with learnings from some 1,300 hours of front line work with small and medium sized companies, plus the latest Eureka! Ranch research



Doug Hall

on the science of growth.

"My personal mission is to take what has proven successful for large companies and transfer these methods to help America's smaller companies," said Hall.

Hall, also hosts "Brain Brew," a radio program nationally syndicated by Public Radio International. Plan to attend Compete Smart this fall, hear Doug and "Electrify Your Business."



Brought to you by MMEC & Co-host NorthWestern Energy, with support from Montana Agro-Energy Plan, First Interstate Bank, Montana Community Finance Corp., Montana Hydraulics LLC, Sterling Savings Bank, Montana Chamber of Commerce, General Distributing, Montana State Fund, and other fine sponsors.

OCTOBER 2-3, 2008
Missoula Hilton Garden Inn

Electrify Your Business with Manufacturing Peers and Allies:

Stimulating Plant Tours: Spectrum Products, CM Manufacturing & American Eagle Instruments; OR Roscoe Bridges, GTC Nutrition and Diversified Plastics; OR take a short walking tour before pre-sessions to Diversified Plastics & Felco Industries.

Energizing Keynote Luncheon: Doug Hall, "Made in USA: Choices for Growth"

Montana Product Showcase & Expanded Exhibitor Hall

Top Flight Evening Event Oct. 2: enjoy fine dining with a "Montanaco's" menu, featuring Montana grown & raised products

Pre-Flight Breakfast with Exhibitors & Sponsors

Keys to Success from Three Montana Company Leaders:
Peter Stark, North Slope Sustainable Wood, LLC, Missoula
Laura Fleming, SRS Crisafulli, Glendive
Bjorn Nabozney, Big Sky Brewing, Missoula

SIX Breakout Tracks (25 sessions to choose from over two days):

Reel In Marketing Opportunities
Connect the Pull of Lean
Tap the Currents of Workforce
Get Lift with Growth Tools
Soar with Informed Decision-Making
Power Glide with Targeted Tools

WRAP UP & Closing Luncheon with Feature Guest Ken Green, Timberline Tool

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Worker Shortage (continued from cover)

Anderson and Redfield are applying the same creative energy to issues that started the “BIG idea” 30 years ago to make lefse in commercial quantities from tiny Opheim. With no production equipment to launch the business, Evan Granrud designed the rolling machines and other needed equipment. Myrt worked out the perfect recipe that would achieve the “just like Grandma used to make” quality. The couple were surprised at the demand for their product, and may have felt a bit overwhelmed by it all, Redfield recalls.

Evan’s machines are still in use today. “They are basic but complex enough so they are hard to copy,” Anderson said. “Most of the equipment in the lefse room was invented by Evan: the tube stuffers, frying grills, cooling conveyer.”

Bottleneck Eliminated

In early explorations for improvements, Detrick and the new owners identified a production bottleneck with the mechanical rolling machines. Daily output was limited by their output, using a process that required a person to run each machine and advance it manually when a piece of lefse was rolled to the “perfect” size. Four machines required four workers, and quality and uniformity were affected when fatigue or distractions occurred.

On Detrick’s advice, a pair of machines were automated several years ago using programmable logic controls (PLCs) to automatically roll out a piece of lefse to the right size, eliminating the use of a foot pedal and using a computer eye to sense when the lefse rotated. Kurt Breigenzer from KB Consulting out of Glasgow, was hired for the automation upgrade.

“He and a partner had to work on a trial and error basis as there is nothing like it anywhere,” Anderson said. “We didn’t know if it would work, but went ahead over the summer break. Kurt is a really smart guy, and the result couldn’t have been more perfect.”

Breigenzer was impressed with the machine design. “These are amazing machines, as is the fact that he [Evan] man-

aged all the different movements that had to be done to roll a piece out evenly, using a very simple design. It worked and worked well.”

Breigenzer’s big challenge was how to write a program for the computer PLC – “I had to learn it from scratch.”

Once this automation was proven out, the owners (Alice and Twyla) decided to automate the remaining machines when time allowed. This would enable one person to load two rolling machines, cutting the labor requirement for this production step from four to two. It also sped up the process by standardizing the rolling time.

“Since automating... we haven’t needed two more workers we could not get, and it has made the process faster... a win-win in every way.”

WIRED Grant Helps with Training Manual

“For this project, WIRED training dollars, through a grant from the Montana Department of Commerce in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor, were used to produce a training manual for the machines and train workers on their operation and maintenance. Critical documentation was included on how to do programming changes in the software if needed,” Haider explained. Because Breigenzer had done the design and installation of the automated upgrades, he was the natural choice to write the manual and train the staff.

Writing the manual was a new challenge, Breigenzer said. “I knew the machine like the back of my hand, but putting it on paper for someone new to the equipment, that took awhile.”

The owners are very pleased with the results, and the manual will help

keep the rolling machines functioning without waiting for outside assistance if adjustments are needed.

“Since automating the machines, we haven’t needed two more workers we could not get, and it has made the process faster, increasing our production — so a win-win in every way,” Anderson said.

Production is up from 500 packages a day to 575. Many days they get 600 packages or more. “That was unheard of three or four years ago,” she added.

Not all the changes have been so complex. Even simple things have made a difference. For instance, twist ties have been eliminated; now a heat sealer is used.

“The MMEC staff has really been good to work with,” added Redfield. “We have received lots of help and ideas from them. They are very interested in our business and wanted us to succeed.”

The changes have really made a difference. Productivity has increased by 20 percent, “and that’s a lot in a labor intensive business,” Anderson said.

Coupled with a project with marketing and design specialist Rick Bakko to improve the website and update package branding, the innovations have improved profits, enabling a boost in wages, “and bonuses are certainly better than they were,” Anderson said.

Mid-October Process Starts

Starting in mid-October, Granrud’s receives 60,000 lbs. of potatoes, using 1,000 lbs. a day. The recipe calls for both reds and whites that come from dryland farms around Williston, N.D., so they aren’t too moist. Near the end of the season potatoes are purchased from the local grocer, using about 90,000 lbs. through the season to produce 47,000 one-pound packages of lefse.

Granrud’s crew is like family; they have fun and work hard. “Without them we wouldn’t have anything; they really care about the product,” Anderson said.

A detailed chronicle of just what is involved in making Granrud’s lefse can be viewed on the company website www.lefseshack.com.

ISO 9000:2008 – The Clarification Years!

By Todd Daniels, MMEC Field Engineer



Sometime this fall, the latest revision of the ISO international quality standard, ISO 9000:2008, will be released. Early indications, based upon the Draft International Standard (DIS), indicate that this fourth release will be known best for its ability to clarify. So let's talk about what that means.

First of all, understand that the ISO 9000 standard requires continual review (a review must be initiated within five years of the publication of the standard) mainly in an effort to incorporate user feedback and keep current with recent developments in management system practices. For this reason, ISO 9000 and its family of standards will persistently be revised. The

last revision was done in 2004 with significant refocusing on customer service.

For this revision, the main feedback provided to the ISO/TC 176 committee (the technical committee that oversees amendments and revisions to ISO 9000), was to clarify requirements and terminology but not to change the requirements. The committee listened, and essentially the changes to ISO 9001:2008 are comprised of new notes and some changes in terminology, but no changes to the intent of the requirements. The impact to an organization already certified to ISO 9001 will be minimal to nonexistent.

A few of the significant revisions to ISO 9001:2008 are outlined in the table below along with notes to consider when determining if this change will impact your quality management system.

Note: The items in the table below are based on the ISO/DIS 9001 revision secured by MMEC in March 2008.

Clause	Revision	What to Think About
Introduction	"Statutory" has been added in several locations of Introduction to be consistent with "statutory and regulatory" used in clause 7.2.1.	Do you need to revise terminology to be consistent? Do you include legal requirements in your quality management system?
7.5.1 & 7.6	"Equipment" replaces the term "device" .	Do you need to revise terminology to be consistent?
4.1, 6.2, 6.22 & 8.1	"Product quality" has been replaced throughout the standard with terms like "conformity to product requirement" .	Have product requirements been defined and conveyed in your quality management system? Do you need to revise terminology to be consistent?
4.1	The terms "determined" and "defined" are used instead of "identified" when referring to the processes in the quality management system.	Have your processes been defined somewhere in your quality management system documentation? Do you need to revise terminology to be consistent?
4.1	Outsourcing has been thoroughly defined through the addition of two new notes in this clause. The emphasis is on defining what outsourcing and insuring the organization has control and responsibility for these processes. <See NOTE 2 & 3 in revised standard>	Do you outsource any of your production and service? Is the control of outsourced work appropriate to the potential impact on product requirements and the quality management system?
6.2.2	Revisions in this clause focus on applying appropriate training or action and ensuring that competence has been achieved. This rewording is simply to get at the original intent of the 2000 revision. <See clause b) & c) in revised standard>	Are you training to train or are you focusing on techniques to ensure people understand their job as well as impact on product and the quality management system? Do you cover this already with clause 7.4 or is more needed?
8.2.3	The changes here are meant to differentiate this clause from clause 8.2.4 a bit more. The note, written like other areas of the Standard, is intended to guide the application of suitable measuring and monitoring of processes according to their impact on the product or the quality management system. <See new NOTE in revised standard>	Have you identified the processes that have the most impact on the product or quality management system (see clause 4.1)? Do you apply the appropriate measurement tools to improve the product or system quality? Do the measures support the objectives of the quality management system?
8.3	Wording in this clause has mainly been shuffled to sound consistent with the rest of the Standard.	Do you need to revise terminology or numbering to be consistent?

Since other quality standards like AS9100 or ISO 13485 use ISO 9001 as a base structure, users should keep an eye out for revisions to these standards as well. Also look for a significantly revised and beefed up ISO 9004 standard to be released sometime in 2009.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact MMEC or email tdaniels@mt.gov.

Manufacturing News

Federal Grants Encourage Use of Woody Debris and Low Value Trees

Several companies in Montana's wood industry will receive grants totaling nearly \$1 million to encourage innovative uses of low-value trees and woody debris removed from national forests. Montana recipients are **Marks Ranch and Lumber** in Clancy (\$211,500), **Big Sky Shavings** in Hall (\$250,000), **Osler Logging** in Bozeman (\$250,000); and the **Kootenai Business Park** Industrial District in Libby (\$250,000). Reducing wildfire fuels is one goal of the grant program as is inducement for uses in the bio-fuels industry. The grants will enable equipment purchases for three firms and will help Osler Logging to more efficiently transport ground fuel out of the forests.

Successful Commercial Solar Water Heating System Featured

AERO, Montana's Alternative Energy Resources Organization, along with NorthWestern Energy and Radiant Engineering recently hosted an energy tour of a successful commercial size solar water heating facility at **Thirteen Mile Lamb & Wool Company** north of Belgrade. The company uses a solar hot water wool washing and cleaning system for its certified organic sheep operation, processing its own wool and offering custom wool processing to others.

Fire Sparks Development Planning

An early May fire destroyed the production facilities and several connected buildings at **Montana Specialty Mills** in Great Falls where the plant has operated for more than 60 years. Nearby oilseed bins and vegetable oil tanks were spared in the blaze. The event sparked local development officials into an effort to fast track the area's industrial park, according to the Great Falls Tribune. The mill had been a candidate for phase one development next year. <http://www.mtspecialtymills.com>

Is It Worth It? New Tool Helps

Information is abundant about how to produce and use biofuel. Getting quality information to decide whether or not to pursue bio-energy crops has not been as available. But a new Montana State University Extension associate specialist's work is helping clarify the choices in a series of one- to four-page worksheets. Joel Schumacher and other MSU economists have posted that information onto the MSU Agricultural Marketing Policy Center's web site: www.ampc.montana.edu/energyinformation.html

Innovative Retrofit for Energy Efficiency, Modernization

Production in Corbond's polyurethane systems blending plant is underway in the 41,000 square foot building known as the "Old Featherstone Mill" in Belgrade. The original historic grain facility was the largest shipping point for wheat west of the Mississippi River in 1904. A large warehouse was added in the early 1970s, and **Corbond Corporation** purchased the property in 2004. The recent warehouse building renovation used Corbond® performance insulation and other innovative modernization to achieve a large building energy retrofit that keeps the building temperature from dipping below 45 degrees (F) even with heaters off. www.corbond.com

EU Chemical Policy Reforms Loom

REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemical substances) is a major reform of EU chemicals policy, affecting all global supply chains that produce and use chemicals. U.S. exporters to Europe should carefully consider this piece of EU environmental legislation. Its first business relevant deadline is June 1, 2008 when pre-registration starts. For more information about REACH implications, visit www.buyusa.gov/europeanunion/reach.html

MMEC "Play the Lean Game" Workshop Set

"Play the Lean Game," MMEC's powerful workshop and live simulation on the concepts of Lean Manufacturing will be offered in Helena on Wednesday, June 25, at the Montana Department of Commerce Building, 301 South Park Ave.

Participants will experience, first hand, what it's like to apply manufacturing techniques for greater productivity and profit in a simulated manufacturing environment. Lean techniques reward you with standardized processes, less work in process, better use of floor space and added capacity without large capital expenses.

Are you ready to improve on-time delivery, reduce defects and gain participatory decision making? Register for this entertaining, all-day workshop at www.mtmanufacturingcenter.com or call MMEC 406-994-4507. Registration is \$195 and includes refreshments, lunch and materials.

State Chamber Moves to Showpiece Location

After 20 years in the same location, the Montana Chamber of Commerce moved to a new location in the former Helena Sand & Gravel/Maronick Construction office at 900 Gibbon Street in Helena. The new facility has great space, fantastic lighting and will be a showpiece for the state chamber and its work on advocacy, international trade and health insurance for businesses, according to Webb Brown, Chamber President & CEO.



**SEND NEWS BRIEFS
For the MFG NEWS!**

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Feel free to contact MMEC about manufacturing topics or issues that concern you and send your company news briefs to
dnash@coe.montana.edu

Bozeman Businessman Publishes Guide

When it comes to promoting your business, one size does not fit all. Bozeman radio celebrity Tom Egelhoff, an internationally known speaker with 32 years of small business know-how, has published a new book "How to Market, Advertise and Promote Your Business or Service in Your Own Backyard." It will hit local book store shelves in June. Designed for small businesses with ten or fewer employees, the book offers an indepth guide to and secrets of successful small-town marketing. To learn more on this topic, visit Egelhoff's popular website www.smalltownmarketing.com

Wind Turbine Plant Targets Butte Area

A German company, Fuhrlander AG of Waigandshain, has plans to build a wind turbine manufacturing plant near Butte, according to a March news announcement by Gov. Brian Schweitzer.

The \$25 million Chafin-Fuhrlander Wind Turbine Manufacturing plant would begin construction this fall and finish by next year if a feasibility study now underway confirms expectations. The plant would employ 150 people, possibly more.

The company selected Montana for its North American manufacturing facility because of recent incentives adopted by the state and plans for wind farm development in the region, according to news at the press conference. Available work force and training opportunities at Montana Tech also attracted interest in building near Butte.

The turbines are estimated to cost about \$4 million each, and produce up to 2.5 megawatts of electricity, enough power for about 2,000 homes.

The feasibility study is underway after the Montana Department of Commerce awarded \$15,000 from the Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development (CDBG-ED) Program to Butte-Silver Bow County. Commerce officials said the county will use the \$15,000 in partnership with \$25,000 from the Butte-Silver Bow Tax Increment Financed Industrial District (TIFD), and \$10,000 from Chafin-Fuhrlander to conduct the study to determine current and future market demands for wind turbine generation machines, types required to meet market needs, regulatory climate, and timelines for production.

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Bring your business card to enter a drawing for a free seat at MMEC's Compete Smart Manufacturing Conference on Oct. 2-3, 2008 in Missoula or delicious caramels from Béquet Confections.

RSVP to Attend FREE at a date/location near you:

Great Falls	June 18	from 9-noon, Crystal Inns
Helena	July 8	from 9-noon, Super 8
Joliet	July 16	from 1-4 p.m., Community Center
Bozeman	July 16	from 1-4 p.m., Bozeman Chamber of Commerce
Columbus	July 17	from 9-noon, Fire Hall
Butte	July 17	from 9-noon, Copper King Hotel
Billings	July 23	from 9-noon, La Quinta
Glasgow	July 29	from 1-4 p.m., Cottonwood Inn
Wolf Point	July 30	from 9-noon, Great Northern Development
Sidney	August 13	from 1-4 p.m., Northern Plains Ag Research Lab
Miles City	August 14	from 9-noon, Miles Community College, Rm 322

RSVP at <http://www.mtmanufacturingcenter.com>


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Winning Ways



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