

ForwardFocus

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Summer 2006

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Montana Manufacturing Center

University Technical Assistance Program

Successful Montana companies to Share Challenges and Triumphs at Conference October 4 and 5

By Deborah Nash, MMEC

Helena – The spotlight will focus on three Montana companies that are competing successfully in three very different markets during the statewide manufacturing conference “Compete Smart,” coming to Helena on October 4 and 5. Featured in the segment called “eXtreme Challenges” are Marks-Miller Post & Pole of Clancy, Semitool of Kalispell and Diversified Plastics, Inc. of Missoula.

Since 1998, this segment has been a favorite with participants, offering valuable insights based on real experience within industry. It is a regular highlight of the biennial conference that draws manufacturers from across Montana.

Organized by the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center, a Montana State University outreach center in Bozeman, and co-hosted by North-Western Energy, the event will also include an acclaimed keynote address “the Art of Vision” with Erik Wahl. Area plant

tours, select training sessions and a special student showcase are additional conference features.

More of the Montana mystique will be unveiled during the closing luncheon when a special guest will deliver remarks and wrap-up the two day event. The main conference activities will be at the Great Northern Helena Hotel.

During the eXtreme Challenges segment, participants will hear a ten point plan for developing business success from Darrell Miller of Marks-Miller Post & Pole. He will share the trials, tribulations and payoffs of running a business in Montana and what has set the partnership apart from the competition over the past 30 years. Marks-Miller is owned and operated by Gary and Debbie Marks and Darrell and his wife Karen. Since its beginnings in 1976, both families have been actively involved in all daily operations.

Those attending will also get a peek into the world of vertical integration from Jim Wright, Vice-President of Manufacturing at Semitool. See the common threads of business pressure from the company’s unique perspective in a highly competitive global market. Semitool is one of Montana’s largest companies and world leader in design, manufacture and support of high-performance equipment for the semiconductor industry.

Captivating attention will also be the stories of success and failure with relatives in the family business as told by Brad Reid, CEO at Diversified Plastics. Picking up on the conference theme of



Brad Reid



Darrell Miller



Jim Wright

EXTREME MAKEOVER

IT STARTS WITH A VISION

You won’t want to miss this! Since 1998, the Montana company stories have been a favorite at Compete Smart. And more Montana mystique will be unveiled during the closing luncheon.

“Extreme Makeover: It Starts with a Vision,” he will describe the very personal “re-envisioning” for his company after a catastrophic fire just over a year ago. Diversified specializes in engineered plastics; the business started in the family garage in 1976 and is now run by Reid and his wife Wendy.

Conference registration is \$175 with several discount options, and pre-registration is required. For more information on the Compete Smart conference, go to the Montana Manufacturing Center website www.mtmanufacturingcenter.com/Events/index.com.

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Closing the Gap

1970s Los Angeles smog revisited.

Recently, I had the privilege of accompanying Montana's Congressman, Denny Rehberg, on a trade mission to expand opportunities for Montana companies and thereby helping them grow.



We spent three nights in Seoul, South Korea, and three nights in Tianjin, China. Trekkies will understand when I use the Spockonian understatement "interesting".

Both cities have populations in excess of 10 million. Tianjin, situated on a port, is China's fourth largest city and heavily industrialized. The skyline is punctuated with cranes constructing high-rise buildings. China will host the 2008 Summer Olympics and some of the sports facilities will be in Tianjin, about 100 km (60 miles) from Beijing.

The air quality was comparable to Los Angeles in the late 1960s and early 70s. Our eyes burned, and our throats became raw. How, we wondered, will athletes perform... and what will Olympic visitors' reaction be? We were told officials plan to close down factories and restrict traffic for several months before the Games in an attempt to clean up the air.

To my biased eyes, the pollution was another brick in the wall we call trade barriers (i.e.: competitor has no pollution control costs).

It's no secret; we've been critical of countries that have agreed to "fair trade" – and then tilt the proverbial "level playing field" in their favor. You don't have to look far for news decrying China's violations — currency manipulation, tariffs, and subsidies. More infamous is its failure to protect intellectual property rights.

The irony is that the United States faces a real danger of becoming a spectator in any global trade expansion if we do not embrace China as a trading partner. Addressing the slow growth of US exports to China, a recent National Council for Advanced Manufacturing article, "Manufacturers Alliance/MAPI: Numerous Barriers Hinder Successful Penetration of Chinese Market by U.S. Firms,"

noted the U.S. needs to pursue an "aggressive policy ... in order to avoid being left as a spectator..." Our export growth to China is not keeping pace with China's economic growth rate. A huge opportunity is being missed.

The trade mission showed that South Korea's economy is thriving, and they are a willing and capable trading partner. Montana's manufacturing community can not afford to ignore these behemoth markets.

All of this begs the question: Why should we be concerned with export markets? Arnie Sherman, Director of the Montana World Trade Center at the University of Montana, put it very succinctly, "...because 96% of the world's population does not live in the United States." Most potential customers live elsewhere. Elsewhere is where the bulk of consumers are.

A recent issue of *Manufacturing & Technology News* shows, "Small- to mid-sized manufacturing companies are not taking advantage of burgeoning growth opportunities that exist in overseas markets..." Instead, more than half are relying on introduction of new products for growth (very expensive and high risk), and at the same time, nearly half said global competition has forced them to lower prices.

Does your company need to include exports, or increase exports, in your growth strategy? Fortunately, there are resources available in Montana to help. MMEC, the Montana Department of Commerce, the Montana World Trade Center, and US Commercial Services are all capable, ready and willing to assist.

Want to learn more? Join us in October at Compete Smart in Helena for sessions in a Track called "Market Makeover: International Perspective" (see related article on page 5) and other concurrent tracks for business improvement. You won't be sorry.

Steve Holland, MMEC Director

The Power in Connecting...Leads to Revenue Stream

Unused Ford F350 pickup bumpers are no longer piling up at Intercontinental Truck Bodies (ITB) near Conrad, Mont., thanks to some assistance from MMEC/UTAP.

Less than two weeks after MMEC Field Engineer

Todd Daniels put in a call to Montana State University UTAP (University Technical Assistance Program) for ideas on how ITB might get rid of a growing stockpile of unused bumpers and possibly recoup some money in the deal, the pile had disappeared.

"You don't think of passing along a connection or two as a big deal, but it meant a lot to this Montana company," says Daniels.

ITB makes customer-ordered modifications to F350s for use as special towing units for the military; part of the modification replaces the stock front bumper



Modifications include heavy duty bumper

with a heavy duty custom build. The company expects hundreds to be replaced over the next few years, but a request to the supplier not to include them on future orders could not be accommodated. The pile was growing.

At an end of June visit to ITB, Daniels heard that the company was considering getting registered with an Internet spare parts group to sell the bumpers direct to interested buyers. Within a week of getting the call to help make it happen, UTAP Engineer and graduate student Clint Finlayson had found several promising companies for ITB to consider. A mid-July walk through of the ITB production area revealed that the stockpile of bumpers was gone.

ITB General Manager Rob Cook said that the accumulation had been purchased by one of the companies from

the UTAP findings, a company that sells parts with fewer than five miles on them. It had taken all of the accumulation and future bumpers, as well. Not only has floor space has been reclaimed, waste is being "recycled" back into the marketplace and a revenue stream established for the company.



Finding a buyer frees up floor space

Since 1986, UTAP engineering graduate students have made engineering, technology, and research assistance available to manufacturers across Montana while they attend coursework in the College of Engineering at MSU. The graduate research assistantship, and EDA University Center, is currently under the supervision of MMEC Field Engineer Mark Shyne. Its graduate students have provided supplier and materials research to many companies. In the second year of a partnership with the Montana World Trade Center at the University of Montana, UTAP has expanded to include marketing and strategic business development assistance.

MMEC is First WIRED Grant Recipient

The first grant for Montana's New Homestead Act (WIRED) funds has been awarded to the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) according to an announcement by Governor Brian Schweitzer along with The Department of Labor and Industry, The Department of Commerce, The Governor's Office of Economic Development and the Department of Agriculture. MMEC is the first in a series of grant recipients that will help develop the bio-products industry and create related new jobs for workforce in 32 counties across Montana.

MMEC will receive \$699,134 over three years to work with companies in those counties in an effort to build up and support manufacturing involving bio-products.

"MMEC has a proven track record of providing training in advanced manu-

facturing for Montana's businesses," said Governor Brian Schweitzer. "The award



"From seed to shelf"— a display from WIRED kickoff event this summer

will be used to diversify and increase the economic base in the WIRED region by

developing and delivering client-driven training to improve skills, productivity, and wages of new and incumbent workers."

MMEC has begun steps to identify manufacturing firms that fit the potential cluster in the region and the kinds of training that will support their efforts. The Center has also initiated the hiring process for an additional field resource.

"This is a real example of cultivating the manufacturing sector we call value-added agriculture," commented MMEC Director Steve Holland. "The fields of bio-lubricants and bio-products represent a huge potential for Montana. We are excited to have the opportunity through the WIRED program to help grow these innovative clusters and a more robust economy for Montana."

WIRED Montana encompasses 32 counties and six Indian reservations.



AS9100 Quality Sytems...

Boeing Partners with MEPs to Assist Suppliers

By Deborah Nash, MMEC

Sound quality management plays a key role in the competitive edge of the U.S. primes in the aerospace industry whose aircraft are second to none. A strategic initiative to maintain that edge is underway at Boeing Company. And the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) has been enlisted to help standardize quality systems among Boeing suppliers across the U.S. and into Montana.

In January of this year, 438 Boeing suppliers received a letter from company executives stating that they must be AS9100 certified by June of 2007 through an aerospace-accredited Industry Controlled Other Party (ICOP) registrar. AS/EN9100 is the aerospace industry's quality system standard designed to assure quality in design and development, as well as production.

The Boeing mandate is expected to trigger other industry leaders toward the AS9100 requirement as well, according to Ray Wersel, Boeing, IDS Supplier Development, who presented information at a recent NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership conference.

Boeing will roll out the mandate to several thousand additional suppliers by 2007, according to Wersel. It is expected to then trickle down to second and third tier suppliers and beyond.

In order to reach out to suppliers and help them prepare for the critical certification, Boeing partnered with the MEP in April to offer assistance to companies as they prepare to certify. MEP centers like the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) are a ready resource for companies that need assistance with understanding, implementing or transitioning their quality system to the standard.

Boeing mandate on AS9100 to address and eliminate redundant audits faced by some suppliers and beef up systems for others.

As a supplement to the international Quality Management System standard ISO 9001, AS/EN9100 is recognized worldwide. It addresses specific aerospace requirements for both civil and military aviation and aerospace needs.

The effort by Boeing is to "align our quality management system flow-down with the international aerospace industry." It is intended to address and eliminate redundant audits now faced by some of its suppliers and beef up systems for others, according to the Boeing Web site. Its January communication acknowledged that some suppliers have obtained

certification to AS/EN9100 on their own initiative and said it both appreciates and will recognize those certifications.

Summit Aeronautics Group in Helena is one such supplier. It received its Certificate of Registration in December 2005 from NQA/USA. One of the sources that Summit used for a readiness audit review was MMEC. Through a Montana Aerospace Development Association grant, Summit was able to contract with the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center for a readiness assessment prior to undergoing its ICOP audit.

MMEC engineers have performed similar pre-audit assessments for a number of Montana companies in both AS9100 and ISO9001, helping identify and target non-conformance areas in preparation for a formal audit. Field staff coach and advise on realistic, cost-effective strategies for implementing or transitioning a quality management plan. On-site workshops with practice audit scenarios that familiarize employees with what to expect during an audit are also available from MMEC.

Even companies that don't go the full stretch to certification can benefit from a quality system gap assessment, according to MMEC Director Steve Holland, who is pleased to see MEP partnership aimed at strengthen the Boeing supply chain.

Program Manager.

Alberta has the fastest growing economy in Canada and is one of the world's most vibrant and competitive markets. With the explosion of investment in the Oil Sands project, the entire province is in critical need of all types of products and services. For more information about the incredible Canadian Oil Sands opportunities, please visit: <http://www.buyusa.gov/montana/canadaoilsands.html>.

The timeframe is tentatively late October to mid-November with application deadline of Sept. 15. Companies

that best fit the profile for this trip are housing and infrastructure and mining sectors. Attending companies will be assigned a US Foreign Commercial Service agent who specializes in their market segment, so that pre-screened potential business partners fit company specifications. The MWTC goal is to help CLOSE DEALS as it continues to "Take Montana to the World." Contact Harrington megan@mwtc.org or Mark Peters markpeters@mail.doc.gov for more information.

Alberta is Next Stop on MWTC Trade Circuit

Fresh off a successful trade mission to South Korea and China, the Montana World Trade Center (MWTC) www.mwtc.org at the University of Montana in Missoula, together with the US Commercial Service, is preparing for a trade mission to Alberta, Canada.

"We often forget that our neighbor to the north is an 'international' venture, but Montana can't afford to miss out on the immense opportunities, particularly in its Oil Sands region, in the *housing and infrastructure and mining sectors*," reminds Megan Harrington, MWTC

At Compete Smart...

Successful Export Strategies for Manufacturing CEOs

Growth opportunities for manufacturers are increasingly international, according to Stone & Associates, one of the foremost experts on small-to-medium-sized manufacturers providing strategic research, analysis and business intelligence service for business-to-business markets. Global markets are becoming more attractive and critical due to a declining dollar, more fierce competition, and billions of new consumers joining the global economy.

In response, CEOs and executives of small and mid-sized manufacturing firms must accelerate their attention to international markets. For that reason, MMEC is offering a strategic information session "Successful Export Strategies for CEOs" at Compete Smart this fall in Helena. The session will launch the "Market Makeover: International Perspective" breakout track and is being underwritten by the national Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and Montana World Trade Center (MWTC) at the University of Montana.

Thomas Specializes in Business Development

Carroll Thomas, partnership catalyst for the National Institute for Standards & Technology MEP, will conduct the session based on compelling new research on the strategic choices of successful exporters. It is uniquely focused on CEO level strategic issues and management challenges such as commitment and mindset to achieve rapid growth, best practices and strategic advantages to drive success. Thomas served as a member of the MEP think tank that contributed to the Department of Commerce "Manufacturing in America Report," on chronically important trends for the future of manufacturing. She has extensive entrepreneurial and business development acumen with 30 years working for notable public, private, and non-profit organizations and a national retail fran-



Carroll Thomas

chise business.

Her presentation follows the conference opening luncheon keynote "The Art of Vision" on Wednesday, Oct. 4. It launches a track that also includes excellent resources on export operational issues. "How to Get Started Exporting" will also be offered Wednesday, led by Carey Hester, International Trade Specialist for the Montana Department of Commerce. Hester was recently awarded the Governors Award for Export Advocate of the Year.

More Montana Perspective

On Thursday, a two-part session "Going Global in 2006: A Montana Perspective" will complete the international track. This session will feature remarks by Director Andres Liu, from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Los Angeles and a panel discussion led by Megan Harrington, Project Manager at MWTC. Having worked in marketing domestically and sales internationally, she continues working in the international arena with special projects and new members at MWTC.

Two very special panelists from Montana industry will sit on the panel, John Ryan, CEO at ArmorAuto, and Russell Moody, owner and President of RM International, to share real-world experience in international sales with tips on what works and where the pitfalls are. Ryan is also President of M16 Technologies Inc, a clearing house for developing new technologies. Moody, runs Mountain Springs Spas, a family-owned business since 1983, in Stevensville. His company has doubled its export sales since 2003 and now has distributors in five countries.

The Global Perspectives panel will also include Mark Peters, Director of the Montana U.S. Export Assistance Center (USEAC), and Carl Coletti, an MWTC program manager with more than 25 years of global business experience. As General Manager and Director of International Business Development

for Honeywell Inc., Coletti was responsible for the establishment and management of strategic business affiliates in Asia (China and India); the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey); and Europe (Italy and Yugoslavia).

Peters opened the Montana USEAC in 1998 and has worked for the Commercial Service in Portland, Oregon; San Diego, California; Argentina and Japan. He has served as a Congressional fellow, advising Senators on trade policy, and directed the agency's efforts to increase exports from rural America.



Delegation with the Tianjin Zheng Xin Group Co., Ltd. Mr. Hui Feng, Chairman and CEO, center.

Team Discounts Available

Plan to attend this track and bring along your team to attend related breakout sessions from other tracks. No market makeover is complete without Marti Elder's "Intellectual Property Made Understandable: Building and Protecting IP Value," or "eXtreme Fit: Your Marketing Plan – Your Business Strategy" with marketing consultants Carl Coletti, MWTC, and Leesa Nopper, MarketingWorks, or "Sales Makeover: Using and Managing Sales Reps" with Dee-Ann Cates, who has worked with one of Montana's largest retail manufacturers, and her special guest Dean Yonovich of Hi-Country Snack Foods. Additional sessions targeting Lean Manufacturing, Business Management Essentials and Human Resource topics will also be offered at the conference.

Check out the team discount on registration fees at www.mtmanufacturingcenter.com/Events/index.htm



Semitool headquarters in the pristine Flathead valley

ISO 14000

Semitool Gets ISO 14001 Thumbs Up!

by Deborah Nash, MMEC

SEMITOOL, one of Montana’s premier manufacturing companies, headquartered in Kalispell, strives to be an exemplary environmental citizen. The company received a significant environmental thumbs-up in July during the first ISO 14001 surveillance audit of its environmental management system (EMS). Formal certification to the worldwide environmental quality standard was attained in February.

“Passing the six-month surveillance audit is a real measure of success, often more challenging than the original audit,” according to Kreg Worrest, MMEC field engineer who specializes in quality standards and has worked on several quality projects at Semitool, Inc. “Auditors are looking for indications of continuing improvements during surveillance,” he added, “and that’s what they saw.”

Located just 30 miles from Glacier Park, one of America’s most pristine national parks, Semitool is a world leader in the design, development, manufacture, and support of high performance processing systems used in fabricating semiconductor devices. The company maintains sales and support centers in the United States, Europe and Asia. Its EMS has been in place since 1998.

“Semitool has always maintained a high environmental standard. Certification to ISO 14001 is an opportunity to demonstrate our continued commitment to the local and global community,” said Larry Murphy, President & COO.

“There should never be a concern about environmental activities at Semitool. Due to continued surveillance of environmental activities and a hard working staff, we continue to maintain a high standard. We are serious about our commitment” Tim Dutter, Semitool EHS Coordinator, added.



Tim Dutter, EHS Coordinator

Growing Interest

“I believe certification is a positive. Many countries view ISO certification as a necessity. As such it may impact global sales which has a positive impact locally as well,” Dutter stated.

He cited a growing international trend of compliance to the standard: as of January 2006 Japan had 20,000 ISO 14000 certifications (1/4th of its companies); China 12,000; the U.S. weighing in sixth with 5,100.

Value of Certification

ISO 14001 provides a framework to effectively manage environmental affairs and integrate environmental values into operations, and attaining certification was put into Semitool’s long range planning some time ago.

“We pushed it right behind attaining our ISO 9000 certification. I felt pretty comfortable that we could do it, knowing there’s a learning curve as we started on the path,” Dave Jolly, Facilities Manager at Semitool said. “The ISO process is very dynamic. It’s also a perfect way to grab important disciplines and demonstrate to ourselves and others that we can do this.”

The auditable process provides momentum and helps a company continue to reduce waste as well as costs and inefficiencies. And while required surveillance audits can be stressful, valuable suggestions for future improvement come from “observations” that are part of the audit report.

Dutter is very pleased with the recent audit outcome. “David Boston from Underwriters Laboratories performed a day and a half audit, and it came out very well. We passed with only two minor nonconformances. I thought it would be more difficult due to changes in auditors. David did not conduct the registration audit and wasn’t as familiar with our system. But in reality, he was very true to the standard and did a very good job.”

“We work very, very hard to make sure Semitool is totally compliant with water quality, soil and air quality from a variety of aspects,” he said. “We bear the costs and do monitoring because we want to know what’s going on and where any problems could arise.” Monitoring can cover runoff from its parking lots which are adjacent to

agricultural land. The initiative affects even shipping and receiving.

Anything that profiles as a hazardous waste is described for content, labeled, transported, and manifested properly.

“We have a good emergency response team capable of responding to minor or major incidents in the off-chance a problem occurs,” Dutter said. Public perception is important “and part of that is letting people know that we do things right. ISO 14000 is part of that process.”

Positive Results

ISO certification is a great tool, according to Jolly. It helps build a case for being a responsible citizen when proposing new processes or locations. It demonstrates responsibility toward the environment to regulatory agencies such as the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and others. The company recently moved some of its manufacturing processes to a former Costco property in Kalispell.

Semitool is seeing positive results from its updated EMS.

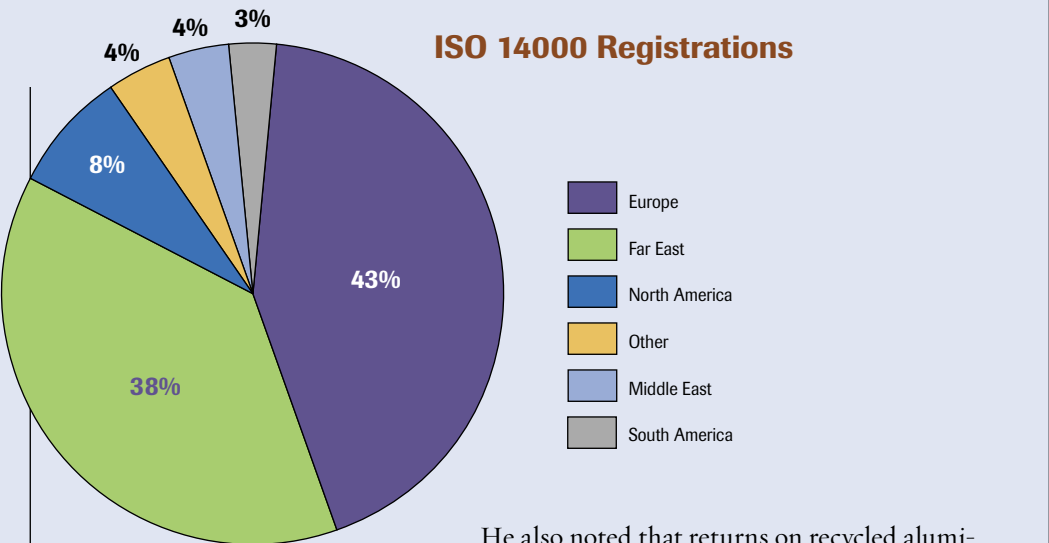
“I’m pretty jazzed,” said Jolly. “We have good people involved; they’ve been extremely supportive and have actually been ‘driving the bus’ on the initiative at this point.”

“We have been able to help our employee base become more aware of what environmental issues are out there and that we have a responsibility; it helps us be similar in the way we think about the environment,” Dutter noted.

The company has further reduced solid waste into the landfill.

“While we have always had aluminum can and paper recycling, now we take a closer look at lesser volume things we generate such as magazines and plastic bottles: Containers have been set up to capture those, and the company has recaptured thousands of dollars in recycling not only cans and bottles but metal scrap from the manufacturing process as well.

Jolly said the company recycles all consumable remnant including plastics and Teflon. “Monetarily, it’s a great value to recycle, particularly Teflon. We see a return quarterly to semi-annually on it.”



He also noted that returns on recycled aluminum cans and bottles helped to create an employee emergency fund to help with hardship incidents.

At this time, Dutter is actively profiling the solid waste stream to the landfill to see “what is in there” – a continuing part of the measuring and monitoring effort. Energy conservation efforts are focusing on electrical use from lighting and computers to equipment that is high voltage. And other natural resource uses such as fossil fuels and employee transportation will be evaluated in the future.

Recent WEEE & RoHS regulations are not impacting Semitool directly. The regulations are often referred to as “lead-free manufacturing” where replacements for lead and other heavy metals are underway in consumer electronics. But Dutter said he occasionally performs studies to provide information to interested customers about the chemical components used in their products.

MMEC Expertise Enlisted

MMEC assisted the company with an ISO 14001 readiness assessment prior to its February certification, Dutter said. Most of the EMS documentation was written and a good plan was in place, but “Kreg Worrest at MMEC helped me cross the T-s and dot the I-s. The biggest help was with understanding the auditing process and work on the pre-assessment. Kreg’s presence was a positive motivator toward work on updating to the revised 2004 standard.”

“He is an expert with quality systems; knows them inside out. I found him very responsive; he worked kinks out and responded to action items to help get the job done.”

“Tim was the man. This would not have happened without his personal commitment and teamwork approach,” Worrest proclaimed.

The project included mass training sessions for staff, and Worrest conducted a management review to explain the audit structure and value of certification to help build management buy-in.

Semitool posts its environmental policy on its website www.semitool.com: “...Reductions of waste and minimization of environmental risk may be accomplished in several different ways including but not limited to avoidance (i.e. material substitutions), mitigation (i.e. treatment) or reduction (i.e. recycling, efficiency improvements).”

*SEMITOOL stock trades on the NASDAQ National Market under the symbol SMTL.



Scrap metal recycled



Longtime Semitool custodian Greg Elavsky at recycle bin

ISO 14000 Certification Essentials:

- Setting environmental goals, objectives, and targets that support the policy.
- Definition of roles, responsibilities, and authorities.
- Training and awareness procedures.
- Process for communication of the EMS to employees, on-site service providers & customers.
- Document and operational control procedures.
- Procedures for emergency response.
- Procedures for monitoring and measuring operations that can have a significant impact on the environment.
- Procedures to correct nonconformance.

Most commonly cited benefits:

- Improved perception of the key environmental issues by employees and a better (greener) public image of the organization.
- An increase in the efficiency and use of energy and raw materials (less waste).
- Improved ability to meet compliance with environmental regulations.
- Dependence on a system rather than just the experience and capabilities of an individual to manage the environmental function of an organization.

www.iso14000.com

Where's the \$\$ for Your Makeover

One of the biggest obstacles for any business makeover is finding necessary capital. Whether it be for new equipment, facility improvements, workforce training or other expansion, where do you turn for financial assistance or to leverage the capital you have?

At Compete Smart, "Your Manufacturing Makeover – Where's the Dollars" is a breakout session that will explore some of the significant financing resources available from state, federal, and local institutions.

"This session will help you discover what's behind the acronyms and some of the faces from the lending community," notes session Moderator Linda Kindrick, Executive Director of the Montana Community Finance Corporation (MCFC), a Compete Smart sponsor.



Discover what's behind the acronyms and some of the faces from the lending community. Learn how to effectively mix and match loan packages.

Kindrick, Executive Director of the Montana Community Finance Corporation (MCFC), a Compete Smart sponsor.

Kindrick has a broad understanding of financial tools for growing businesses having worked with SBA for 22 years as a processing loan officer. MCFC oversees the CDC/504 loan program.

"Reaching your goals may require a combination of resources," according to Gary Morehouse, Regional Development Bureau Chief at the Montana Department of Commerce. He is one of four panelists who will help you understand how to mix and match loan packages and other resources. Learn about some of the changes in various programs that are making it easier to meet the conditions and coordinate packages; how and when to work through your local lending agency, and where to go for more information.

Morehouse and panelists Herb Kulow from the Board of Investments, John Rogers from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) rural development program, Michelle Johnston, Director of Small Business Administration (SBA) program, and Phil Johnson, President of First Interstate Bank in Helena, are actively involved in the money game. Attend this session and learn more about Montana's lending community and programs that might fit your financial needs.

More information about Compete Smart is in this issue of Forward Focus or visit www.mtmanufacturingcenter.com/Events/index.htm.

EXTREME MAKEOVER
IT STARTS WITH A VISION

"COMPETE SMART"

Montana's Premier Manufacturing Conference

At the Great Northern Helena Hotel
Oct. 4-5, 2006 in Helena, MT

AGENDA – Compete Smart, Helena – Great Northern Helena Hotel

WEDNESDAY – October 4 DAY ONE

7:15 am - NOON	Registration in Lobby
8:00 - 11:45 am	Road Tour & eXtreme Student Showcase , brought to you by SAF
8:15 - 11:30	Bonus Pre-session: LEAN Airplane, a live simulation
10:30 - 12:00	Exhibitor Hall w/networking with refreshments
NOON - 1:45 pm	Opening KEYNOTE Luncheon – "The Art of Vision" with Erik Wahl
1:45 - 2:10	Network/Visit Exhibitors/Break
2:10 - 3:40	CONCURRENT BREAKOUTS
	A-1 Export Growth: International Strategies for CEOs, Carroll Thomas
	B-1 Lean Makeover: Start With Value Stream Mapping, Mark Shyne & Todd Daniels, MMEC
	C-1 Intellectual Property Made Understandable, Marti Elder Inc.
	D-1 First Break All the Rules, Mike Wier, North-Winds Publishing
	E-1 eXtreme Fit: Your Marketing Plan – Your Business Strategy, Leesa Nopper, Marketing Works & Carl Coletti, UTAP
3:40 - 4:10	Exhibitors/Networking/Break
4:10 - 5:40	A-2 How to Get Started Exporting, Carey Hester, MT International Trade Office
	B-2 eXtreme Work Instructions: How to Write Right, Debbie Johnson, S&K Electronics
	C-2 Capital for your Makeover: Where's the \$\$, panel moderator Linda Kindrick, MCFC Executive Director
	D-2 eXtreme Problem Solving: Team-Based Solutions, Kreg Worrest, MMEC & Paul Hutter, AEM
	E-2 Sales Makeover: Using & Managing Sales Representatives, DeeAnn Cates w/Hi-Country Snack Foods Dean Yonkovich
5:40 - 6:15	Exhibitors/Networking/Break

6:15 - 9:30

eXtreme Taste Tour & Cookout w/ Lewis & Clark Brewing Company, catered by the Brewhouse.
Co-hosts NorthWestern Energy & Montana Manufacturing Center

Day 1 Ends

THURSDAY – October 5 DAY TWO

7:00 - 8:00 am	Breakfast with Exhibitors and Sponsors
8:00 - 9:45	eXtreme Challenges: Succeeding from Montana . Three Company Leaders
9:45 - 10:10	Exhibitors/Networking/Break
10:10 - 11:30	A-3 Going Global in 2006: A Montana Perspective, Intro with Andres C.Y. Liu, TECO; panel moderator Megan Harrington, MWTC (continues to 1 p.m.)
	B-3 Advanced Lean: The Meat & Potatoes of a Lean Makeover, Bill Nicholson, MMEC (continues to 1 p.m.)
	C-3 eXtreme Power in Your Financials, Al Diebert & Paddy Fleming, MMEC MiiTech (continues to 1 p.m.)
	D-3 The New Art of Hiring Smart, Steve & Vicki Wilson, Willow Creek Consulting
	E-3 Lean for Office & Administration, Lloyd Taylor, Sterling Savings Bank (continues to 1 p.m.)
11:30 - 11:45	Networking/Break
11:45 am - 1:00 pm	A-3 Going Global (continued)
	B-3 Advanced Lean (continued)
	C-3 Financials (continued)
	D-4 eXtreme Recruitment/Retention: Health Plans/Cost Containment, panel moderator Judi Kimmell, EBMS
	E-3 Lean Office (continued)
1:00 - 2:30 pm	WRAP UP with Feature Speaker & Closing Luncheon (Energizing & Entertaining Guest CEO under Wraps; DON'T MISS IT)

XTREME TASTE TOUR & COOKOUT

Wednesday, Oct. 4 • 6:15 to 9:30 p.m.

THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER TICKETS IN TOWN!

Dinner on Wednesday night includes an eXtreme tour through the Lewis & Clark Brewing Company and cookout in an intimate covered setting adjacent to the Brewhouse. Enhance the vision with peers and allies while you network, make deals and see what's involved in making everyone's favorite – Montana microbrews. Hosts for the evening are **NorthWestern Energy** and the **Montana Manufacturing Center**.



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Montana-Dakota Utilities, Dell, Gateway, Computrac, Allied Waste Services, MT Dept. of Environmental Quality, AZ & Company, D.A. Davidson, Helena Community Credit Union

Manufacturing News

Biz Opportunity

MSU-Bozeman’s College of Business is seeking local and regional businesses willing to offer MSU management students practical business experience during the upcoming fall and spring semesters in return for research, issue analysis or operational advice. The students will be enrolled in “Management 475 Management Practicum,” a senior-level class. Businesses interested in working with the Management 475 teams may contact instructor Gary Bishop at (406) 994-4301 or e-mail gbishop@montana.edu. A full article is available on the Web at: <http://www.montana.edu/cpa/news/nwview.php?article=3883>

Unique Open House

PrintingForLess.com blended a celebration of successful economic development in Southwest Montana into the Grand Opening of its new Livingston, Mont. facility in June. Featured events included a flag raising ceremony by the American Legion, a leadership development presentation addressing the challenge of growing capable leaders within a company, panel discussions, networking time, lunch and guided tours of the state-of-the-art facility.

Boeing Contract Awarded to GF Company

Cable Technology, Inc., Great Falls (www.cablemt.com), has been awarded a contract to help Boeing build a new P-8A multi-mission maritime aircraft for the Navy, U.S. Sen. Conrad Burns announced Monday in a Great Falls Tribune article. Cable Tech will provide electrical and coaxial assemblies for the first three P-8A aircraft, with follow-on contracts expected.

Wheat Montana Expands Operation

A ninth **Wheat Montana Bakery and Restaurant** has opened in the state; the second in Billings owned by franchise holder Jeff Riggs. Wheat Montana headquarters is located near Three Forks where the Folkvord family has been involved in agriculture for three generations. The facility includes grain cleaning, processing, flour milling and full scale bakery www.wheat-montana.com

Unforeseen Quality Issues Costly

Dell’s mid-August recall of 4.1 million laptop batteries made by Sony may cost the companies as much as \$400 million, according to a Seattle Times news release giving analyst predictions on the situation. The recall is said to be the largest ever in the consumer-electronics industry.

What’s in Your Niche?

What do companies that make the Fortune **“Best Companies to Work For”** list have in common? A commitment to treating employees well and reaping the financial benefit that comes with that.” – Steve Strauss, small business author/speaker (www.mrallbiz.com)

Financial Seminar for Closely Held Businesses

Financial Management for the Closely Held Business, a two-day seminar sponsored by Big Sky Western Bank, is set for Sept. 21-22 at the Bozeman Holiday Inn. Call Ron Ostermiller at 556-3825 for more information.

SBIR/STTR Info Tour in Bozeman

Montana 2006 SWIFT Tour, a Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR/STTR) sponsored outreach program is coming to Bozeman Sept. 11-12-13. Seminars on SBIR proposal writing, government accounting and how to work with Prime Contractors will be offered. Nearly a dozen federal SBIR/STTR program managers will participate. For more information visit <http://sbir.mt.gov/SwiftTour.asp>

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Learn When a Picture Worth a Thousand Words

Get the muddle out of your manual. Reduce scrap and rework and improve quality.

Cut training time for new employees, and demolish delays that impact your customers when you attend “eXtreme Work Instructions: How to Write for



Debbie Johnson

High-Value” during the Compete Smart Manufacturing Conference this fall.

Instructor Debbie Johnson will give you solid tips during this Wednesday afternoon session for writing for the correct audience with clarity and using appropriate visual tools. Johnson is

Document Control/ISO Coordinator at S&K Electronics in Ronan and has worked for Jore Corporation and Hewlett-Packard. She holds a master of science in technical communication from UM Montana Tech and has taught courses in technical writing.

“Engineers and management level employees are often the writers of work instructions, and in many cases they are not presented for the right audience or at an appropriate level for education level, experience and learning styles,” she said.

From experience in manufacturing, she has observed that production workers are often too embarrassed to ask for more detail or feel intimidated by management. “These things create a fractured team and directly hit the pocketbook,” she added. “Small delays equal big delays when work instructions are not clear.”

Learn to cut waste from your work instructions, improve user productivity, and save time – value-added time – from a master at clear communications. Johnson invites you to bring along both good and poor instruction examples or a project you need assistance clarifying for a hands-on lesson in writing “right.”

Brewing Facility Tour Scheduled during Compete Smart

The most sought after tickets in town will be the Compete Smart “eXtreme Taste Tour & Cookout” for conference goers on Wednesday evening, Oct. 4, in the parking lot adjacent to the Lewis & Clark Brewing Company and Brewhouse. Hosts for the evening will be NorthWestern Energy and the Montana Manufacturing Center, conference organizer.

Dinner will include tours of the state-of-the art brewing company while conference participants enjoy a special cookout prepared by the distinctive Brewhouse. The manufacturing facility tour will wind through the fermentation vessels, past grain and bottle storage and on to the mash tun and brew kettle as the complex process is explained by owner Max Pigman or brewmaster Sam Blessing.

The great explorers, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, inspired the locally owned brewery name and in many ways its brewing style, where pride and craftsmanship are at their best. Tours will move through the tasting/tap room designed in a mine-shaft motif, where more adventurous microbrew officiandos can try select

taste samples.

Plant tours are an increasingly popular event at Compete Smart, which is put together by MMEC every other year specifically for manufacturers to run with peers and allies away from day-to-day distractions.

Other tour options during the conference will include a special Oct. 4 morning visit to the UM College of Technology airport campus shops and a selection of nearby manufacturers (Summit Aero-

nautics Group, Independent Record and American Chemet). Special support from the Student Assistance Foundation made the morning feature possible.

The main conference activities will take place at the Great Northern Helena Hotel on Wednesday and Thursday, Oct. 4 and 5. The event is made possible by many generous sponsors and exhibitors.

Participants must pre-register at www.mtmanufacturingcenter.com/Events/index.htm

Human Resource Tips Offered

Important human resource topics will be offered in breakout sessions at Compete Smart this fall. Bring your team to attend even more. On day one, “First Break All the Rules” with Mike Wier, NorthWinds Publishing, will offer managerial makeover tools and tips workers can use to become solid management material from one of the best books on “managing people ever.”

Participants can jump into “eXtreme Problem Solving: Team-Based Solutions,” a session with a new twist, back by popular demand. Instructors are Kreg Worrest, MMEC, and Paul Hutter, Associated Employers.

Day two will feature guerilla tactics for hiring the best people in “ The New Art of Hiring Smart” with Steve and Vicky Wilson, Willow Creek Consultants. Learn about common pitfalls and mistakes in the hiring and handling of employees.

And for more about valuable recruitment and retention tools through health plan offerings, attend “eXtreme Recuritment/Retention: Health Plans/Cost Containment” with moderator Judi Kimmell. This panel will share options and what’s working for Montana businesses.

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