

Kuhn Tool and Die Co.

Expansion Fueled by Business Development Strategy



Kuhn Tool and Die has been a staple of the Crawford County, PA community for over 50 years. A second-generation family-owned business, the company has had steady growth and is a well-respected voice in the local manufacturing community. Starting—like many employers in the area—as one toolmaker in a garage, the company eventually moved into a facility on Davis Street in Meadville, PA. They added employees over the years and in late 2014 purchased a significantly larger facility in the Meadville area for expanded growth.

With the help of the Northwest Industrial Resource Center (NWIRC) in February, 2014, Kuhn Tool & Die completed a CoreValue business assessment and valuation. The Value Gap report indicated a need to review current strategic business priorities and develop a roadmap for the ongoing development of the business. Kuhn Tool continued working with the NWIRC for guidance and was connected with an affiliated consultant with expertise in the areas of sales, marketing, and strategic planning for manufacturers to assist in the process. The proposed solution included a full business development strategy which began with a

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) Analysis. Then, working with the owners and key next generation team members, goals were set with a defined plan for moving forward. A review of the existing business noted strengths, core competencies, competitors and sales trends. Barriers and

three to five year options were evaluated, then eight specific strategies were developed as opportunities for improvements. In addition to Key Performance Indicators, these strategies included growth, improved management and capabilities, investments in people, and sales and marketing. The end product was a comprehensive and actionable business development strategy that the company began to implement.

Successful completion of this project provided the clarity needed for Kuhn Tool's discussions pertaining to business expansion. As a result, they moved forward with their expansion project at a new facility which was completed in July 2015.



Doug Kuhn, Engineering Manager and Nate Kuhn, Assistant Foreman, get the DMU 50 five axes milling machine operational after their facility move.

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Bonnie Kuhn, Vice President, said with months of careful planning and coordination they began their move to the new facility on July 7 and were up and running within two days. The biggest change for them is “of course the space,” she said. “We now have a huge waterjet room, storage for materials, and space to be more productive and efficient. We also now have room to grow.”

Anticipated results from this expansion include increased and retained sales, costs savings, job creation, and cost avoidance. Susan Hileman, NWIRC Strategic Business Advisor, stated that “CoreValue was the ideal launch-pad for evaluating the company’s current business and developing a plan for where they wanted to go.”

It has been an exciting year in other ways, as Kuhn Tool won the Governors’ Impact Award for Small Business in the Northwest region. They were nominated based on being an innovator within their industry and demonstrating increased revenue growth and workforce. Founded in 1963, Kuhn Tool and Die is a manufacturer of gauges and fixtures for the airfoil industry. With 20 employees, the company is in a very niche industry producing tools for customers who make blades and veins for aircraft jet engines and

land-based applications such as power generators. As company President and Vice President, Ken and Bonnie Kuhn have a deep commitment to the business, to their employees, and to the Meadville community where they live. They believe in providing good jobs, with good pay and benefits, and work to ensure they provide quality products. Management’s belief in treating employees with respect and reinvesting in their skills and equipment means low turnover.

“The NWIRC has played an integral part in efforts to clarify our business goals and develop a good strategy specific to our business objectives. This is a do-able strategy which we believe will help our business grow and gain new customers over the next several years,” said Bonnie Kuhn.

Kuhn’s Facebook post on July 7, 2015 said it all, “Tomorrow marks the beginning of a new home for Kuhn Tool. Room to grow and continue to provide quality fixtures and gages for our customers. We look forward to exceeding customers expectations at our new 41,615 square foot facility.”



Ken (L) and Bonnie (R) Kuhn, share facility layout details with Susan Hileman (Center) of NWIRC.

Cover Photos:

Top: The new Kuhn Tool & Die facility prior to finishing touches and the big move.

Inset: (L-R) Ken Kuhn, President; Bonnie Kuhn, Vice President; Doug Kuhn, Engineering Manager; and Nate Kuhn, Assistant Foreman.

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