

Action Plan

Success Snapshot

Tactical Actions During Pandemic Paves the Way to Growth

Elk County Powdered Metal

Background

Elk County Powdered Metal (ECPM) has over 30 years' experience in low and high-volume production runs of powdered metal components. They specialize in structural components up to 18 square inches in surface area working with all iron-based materials, stainless steel, bronze, and brass. The company was founded to help satisfy a niche in the industry serving the small volume, small and large-part market and over the years has expanded to run large volumes as well. The company is located in Ridgway, PA and currently has 12 employees.

Business Issue

As the pandemic started impacting businesses nationwide in early 2020, ECPM saw orders drop drastically to near nothing and there were no orders or forecasts from their automotive clients.

Their cash flow was stressed, even though they tapped into pandemic resources of the Small Business Administration (SBA). NWIRC conducted a Business Assessment as part of the organization's COVID Recovery Program (CRP). The

assessment indicated that the ECPM was negatively impacted and actions were needed for the company to start a recovery.

A Tactical Action Plan (TAP) was developed with their management team that included a SWOT Analysis, an ideal customer profile, evaluation of the

company's competitors and market, and recommendations of immediate steps.

Solution

COVID-19 Recovery Program (CRP)

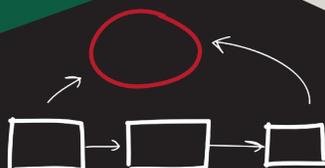
ECPM implemented several of the recommendations outlined in their TAP, along with the help of NWIRC navigating the various resources and expert service providers to address the most pressing concerns and have the greatest impact. The company completed a sales & marketing initiative, with support of Steel Valley Authority, that included market research and sales action plan provided by Deane Patterson. Vision Creative Solutions was contracted to rebuild the company website, including content writing, photos, video, and search engine optimization (SEO). ECPM also looked to internationalize their website by starting with a website translation to Portuguese.

This would allow better communications in Brazil where ECPM has an outside representative working. ECPM regularly ships to Brazil that accounts for approximately 5-10% of annual sales and they hoped to increase Request for Quotes

(RFQs) coming from that area. Vision Creative Solutions facilitated the set-up, installation, configuration, and testing of a translation module in Joomla software to include translation in six languages.

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Success

ECPM President, Paul Stilwell, noted that the COVID Recovery Program (CRP) process was made very simple for busy manufacturers by pulling out details about the company and providing recommendations that were ready to implement. "The SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) was particularly helpful because a SWOT is part of our ISO 9001 certification and it was great to have this updated for the end of the year." He added that the resulting tactical action plan (TAP) gave the ECPM team a very clear direction for moving forward in the future. Stilwell said that prior to the assessment, he typically didn't pay much attention to the services available in the region for companies like his. "Others aren't aware or don't understand the value of working with organizations such as NWIRC, Steel Valley Authority, and PennTAP. If another manufacturer asks me about CRP, I will tell them to pay attention, there's a lot of help out there and a lot going on. The program was a godsend for ECPM," he said. Because of their participation with CRP, ECPM was able to access funding available from NWIRC via the CARES Act to offset the cost of their various projects. As a result of various initiatives, ECPM saw increased/retained sales of over \$640K from 2020 to 2021.



A look inside Elk County Powdered Metal located in Ridgway, PA