

Elizabeth Carbide of North Carolina Posts a Perfect Score on International Certification

Lexington, NC—Elizabeth Carbide of North Carolina finished their recent "journey to quality certification" in grand style.

They began the journey at the same time as their headquarters facility in Pennsylvania, as both plants pursued [ISO 9001](#) quality management certification from the International Organization of Standardization. Their headquarters facility, Elizabeth Carbide Die Company, located in the Pittsburgh suburb of McKeesport, received its certification first. The North Carolina plant accomplished the same goal, but in a way few companies do: with a perfect rating.

Good people doing good work

Plant Manager Bob Miller says the Lexington plant had discussed pursuing ISO quality certification for two or three years as a step toward diversifying their business.



Elizabeth Carbide celebrates ISO 9001 certification with a perfect rating and a bonus of increased communication throughout the facility.

The Lexington team knew that quality management and standardization would improve their business and enhance customer satisfaction, but they weren't sure how to begin. Then in January 2008, after another meeting where they talked about ISO 9001, Barrett Walker of the NC State University Industrial Extension Service (IES) walked in the door and offered the solution they needed.

Miller and his management team jumped at the opportunity, and within a few weeks Walker had secured a Business and

Employee Training grant from DavidsonWorks to pay for the effort, and brought in IES specialist Nora Milley to lead the certification prep. She pushed the Elizabeth Carbide employees to achieve more than they originally thought possible.

"With Nora's leadership, we did the work ourselves," Miller says. "For every meeting we had with Nora, we had two or three with just us. At times we struggled with the homework she gave us and often times corrections were required, but we still enjoyed the challenges."

Their hard work paid off. The ISO auditors could not find a single "nonconformity" in any of the management and production areas they assessed.

Miller insists that his employees, and especially the production line workers, deserve the most credit for Elizabeth Carbide's perfect performance. "It's easy when you have a building full of good people," Miller says, emphasizing not just his employees' technical skills but also their character. "They realized that if it helps this company, then it's going to help them, and they responded positively in every aspect."

The ISO process also showcased employees' hidden talents: the company tapped several workers to be internal auditors, and even discovered potential future management talent.

Better communication and brighter outlook

Abby Murph, the company's customer service manager, credited the ISO process with improving communication at all levels. "Everybody in the place has a voice," she says, "and they're free to express themselves." Employees learned that they could point out problems and management would not only listen, but would take corrective action.

The Lexington facility adds their perfect score to another milestone they're celebrating this year: their 30th anniversary. Since 1979, Elizabeth Carbide of North Carolina has been a leader in manufacturing tooling for the pharmaceutical industry. A subsidiary of The Elizabeth Companies, the 40,000 square foot facility in Lexington specializes in round rotary press tooling.

What's next for Elizabeth Carbide of North Carolina? Miller hopes to use the ISO 9001 certification to attract new business and expand into new product lines. "We have a wonderful pool of talent here," he says, and is not only proud of their accomplishment but confident that they will achieve even more. "This is step one," he insists, and is already talking with Walker and Milley about other improvement opportunities and IES solutions.

When it comes to quality management, Miller is unequivocal. "We're living it."