

Petra Goes for Two, and Becomes First in the East *Goldsboro Company Achieves both ISO and AS At Same Time*

By simultaneously acquiring two international quality standards, ISO 9001 and AS 9100, Petra Precision Machining & Design Inc. of Goldsboro became the first North Carolina company east of Interstate 95 to obtain AS 9100, the quality standard of the aerospace industry. And few companies go for both at the same time.

The time for celebrating arrived on a sunny fall morning. The 15 employees had spent the morning arranging chairs and placing a podium on the carpeted asphalt parking lot. Usually their mornings are spent making customized, highly precise machine parts for companies such as ABB and AAR. But this morning was different.

At least 60 local officials and some of Petra's clients came to celebrate the small company's leap into the big time.

Representatives from North Carolina State University, who had coached Petra through the process, were standing by to unfurl the banner, which would tell passersby what this small company had accomplished.

The potential was palpable.

Local officials expressed their delight. Goldsboro Mayor Al King noted that "it is only fitting and right" for a company in their town to lead the rest of Eastern North Carolina. Dr. Kay Albertson, president of Wayne Community College, expressed pleasure at the success of so many of her students, including Petra owner Earnest Richard.



Petra leaders pose with NC State IES specialists.



Goldsboro audience gives Petra leaders a standing ovation.

Richard had graciously given the podium to his guests. Now, it was time for his reflections.

The Beginning

He told the crowd that his 5-year-old company began with only himself and a maintenance man. He worked nights and weekends to meet the needs of his customers, often making the part, and then packing and delivering it himself. Gradually his company grew, including members of his family. His wife, Sharon Richard, worked

part time while working at another full time job, until Petra grew to the point that she came on board as its full time quality manager.

With ISO 9001, Petra will find it easier to go for government grants and, if their ambitions come true, to export their parts. With AS 9100, Petra qualifies to make parts for North Carolina's burgeoning aerospace industry. Across the globe, these quality management systems from the International Organization for Standardization are recognized and respected. For many of Petra's customers and potential customers, they are required.

"Our next phase is to grow jobs and grow the business," Richard said and the crowd applauded.

With the certification, Richard hopes to stabilize the business. The company now has proof of its quality system. Sharon Richard, who also serves as Petra's marketing director, plans to attend aerospace conferences and pursue federal contracts.

Nora Milley, quality management specialist from NC State, told the crowd that it was almost a year to the day that she first met with Petra to begin monthly coaching sessions. She discovered how much of the company's assets were in the mind of Earnest Richard. Standardized work is an important component of a quality management system, so his knowledge had to be extracted and shared in instructions that a Petra employee could follow.

Not only was it a lot of hard work in a short span of time, the company accomplished it so well that the auditor passed the company with high marks. Milley congratulated Richard as she unfurled the banner.

Richard thanked NC State for the coaching and Wayne Community College for its support, both financial and moral.

As the banner caught the breeze, the different groups posed for photos around it: management, employees, officials, and guests. They were celebrating the achievement, but all agreed that in many ways, this was a beginning.