

Genie Products Achieves Major Coup with ISO 9001 Certification

By Melissa Stanz

Achieving ISO 9001 certification is a major coup for any company, especially for a small company where everyone is stretched to the max. Although Genie Products of Rosman focuses relentlessly on product quality, this process challenged both management and the production team to take things to the next level.

Janet Grey is CEO of Genie Products, a company she and her husband Dick bought about four years ago. A former family therapist, she dove into the certification process head first, even though she felt initially she was trying to learn Greek. “What was difficult for me was writing and organizing all the documentation needed to monitor and validate our methods of quality assurance,” she said.

Celebrate

But earning this internationally recognized certification means more than new business for this manufacturer of replacement parts for thermal spray equipment, and the company did not let challenges get in their way. They celebrated this important achievement in February with a banner presentation from NC State University, their partner in the process. Several local officials and NC State representatives also attended, including Jean



Partially completed copper spray nozzles await further processing at Genie Products.

Keen, Financial Officer, Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, the organization that provided the Incumbent Workforce Training Grant that allowed the company to pursue certification.

During the banner presentation, Janet Grey praised her team. “This is a monumental thing, and you should be pleased with your success,” she said. “Everyone had to participate and you have all done that. Thank you to NC State and the Workforce Development Board who gave us the grant. It’s been a

long process and I appreciate the energy everyone put into it, especially during the audit.”

The 22-employee company manufactures some 22,000 parts for the thermal spray industry; these parts are used in systems that apply ceramic or metal coatings. There are thousands of applications across many industries. Genie Products serves about 400 customers internationally, including GE, Pratt & Whitney, and Delta.

A Big Deal

To keep pace with the demands from these world-class companies, Genie Products needed a plan and a process to permeate its entire business. They chose ISO 9001 registration, an intensive certification that assures processes are in place to make consistently high quality products. The ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001 certification is internationally recognized and frequently required of vendors.

“This registration is very important to us,” said Eddie Bingham, plant manager. “It opens doors to new companies, most of whom require the certification, and it helps us keep business from current customers who are moving toward requiring it from suppliers.”



Genie Products employee Kelly White performs a visual inspection on one of the spray nozzles the company manufactures.

A Long Road

The ISO process started several years ago, but stalled out along the way. About 18 months ago, the new owners, Genie Products CEO Janet Grey and her husband, President Dick Grey, called the NC State University Industrial Extension Service (IES) and asked for help.

NC State ISO specialist Phil Mintz remembers the first meeting with plant employees. “We had a lot to overcome,” he said. “There were some awkward situations from past attempts at ISO, and I had to win their confidence. I spent the first meeting getting things back on track, explaining how the process fits into their requirements and implementing a can-do approach to the whole thing.”

Mintz was relieved when he saw the big shift take place. “I knew we needed complete commitment from everyone, especially on the shop floor, and once we got that, things shifted.” Mintz traveled from Greensboro to conduct training sessions, leaving plenty of homework for the employees. He trained them to do their own audits, and he conducted their first audit. A fellow ISO specialist from NC State handled the pre-assessment prior to the ISO auditors.

Genie Products earned the ISO auditors respect during the audit, and the resulting certification is helping them break new ground. “ISO certification means we now have a system in place to help us concentrate on quality. This should lead to new markets and increased sales,” said Dick Grey.

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