Written by Jay A. Burnette, President, Waukesha Bearings Corporation Friday, 19 August 2011 13:48



Earlier this year, I wrote about challenges facing industry, including the loss of highly specialized engineers and technicians. While finding and retaining key talent has always been a key part of the growth strategies at Waukesha Bearings and its business unit Inpro/Seal, the task has become increasingly difficult in recent years.

As part of Dover Corporation, we're committed to an ongoing investment in both people and tools—with the aim of improving productivity and driving operational excellence. For example, when a CNC mill needs replacing, we don't just swap it out with a like-for-like unit: We invest in a multi-axis machine or one with advanced control capability. Such investments, combined with robust processes and our continuous-improvement culture, have helped us be as efficient as possible with the resources we have.

Inpro/Seal's products are custom-designed to meet the unique needs of each application, so optimizing our engineering teams' efficiency is vital. One way we've done that is by incorporating automation into our engineering processes. Over time, we've developed proprietary design tools that let us easily reference previous designs that can be customized or used to establish a design baseline for a completely new solution. These tools have become our way of institutionalizing the vast knowledge that exists across our organization. By leveraging this technology, our engineering resources are able to support our same-day shipment promise to our customers.

We've also increased our efforts to develop and retain key talent. We see this initiative stretching across our entire organization and touching all functional areas. For example, we've partnered with local high schools and technical colleges to create apprenticeship programs that help meet our need for skilled machinists. In addition, we support our employees in seeking further education that makes them more effective in their current roles and helps them develop to meet their future aspirations. We've sought out high-performers within our organization and created opportunities for them to assume more responsibility and train new employees.

Industry Outlook: Challenges Mean Opportunities

Written by Jay A. Burnette, President, Waukesha Bearings Corporation Friday, 19 August 2011 13:48

Continued investment in our most valuable assets—our people—will ultimately keep us competitive and drive our growth over the long term.

We know our customers are confronting many of the same challenges in finding qualified resources for critical strategic areas that we're facing—and we're there for them. When a pump or motor comes down for maintenance, decisions are being made to upgrade traditional lip seals to more productive sealing technologies that offer permanent bearing protection. Organizations everywhere are seeking advantage in traditional repair or "break-fix" operations in order to free up limited resources and be able to focus on more strategic system-level reliability and efficiency efforts. Our objective is to have the right structure in place to meet those customers' ever-changing needs. This structure includes not only the products that improve reliability and efficiency, but also the highly capable people necessary to sell, engineer, produce and service them.

What's next? Industry must continue to proactively plan for an even higher-level human resource challenge. As many of us have seen, growth in demand doesn't necessarily come in the form of a subtle ramping-up. Sometimes, it's a relatively large step-change. Organizations that plan ahead and invest in developing key talent—before it's needed—will have a significant advantage when that step-change hits.

MT

For more info, enter 1 at www.MT-freeinfo.com

Our Thought Leaders...

- Jay A. Burnette, President, Waukesha Bearings Corporation
- Welch Goggins, President & CEO, Cleaver-Brooks
- Andy Gravitt, Senior Vice President, Industry Business, Schneider Electric
- John Grillos, Executive Chairman, NTT Workforce Development Institute
- Barbara Hulit, President, Fluke Corporation
- Poul Jeppesen, President, SKF North America
- Ron Martin , VP & GM, Asset Optimization and Life Cycle Care, Emerson Process

Management

- Jagannath Rao, President, Industry Solutions Division, Siemens Industry, Inc.
- William J. Stevens, President & CEO, Motion Industries
- Andy Teich, President, Commercial Systems Division, FLIR
- Tribby Warfield, President, North America Commercial, Gates Corporation