

RESULTS

COMPANY PROFILE

Summit Corporation of America, headquartered in Thomaston, has more than 60 years of experience in plating technology serving companies in industries such as aerospace, automotive, electronic and telecommunications. The company employs 100 people in the 140,000 square foot facility that includes prototyping and development labs on-site.

SITUATION

Two years ago, Summit America was emerging from bankruptcy while being confronted by the skyrocketing cost of energy and raw materials. In order to remain competitive and viable, Summit needed a catalyst to reinvigorate their Quality System.

According to Ron Gross, Vice President of Engineering and Quality Assurance, Summit was caught between a rock and a hard place: in order to fulfill the requirements of current customers and attract new, Summit needed to become TS 16949 certified. However, with typical, small business financial constraints, Summit was not prepared to commit to the financial outlay required to perform an internal audit and certification.

SOLUTION

Ray Snyder, the Quality Specialist from CONNSTEP, had heard of Summit's predicaments and after meeting with Gross, was able to commit CONNSTEP's assistance, arranging a payment schedule that met with Summit's financial situation. Through CONNSTEP's access to funding, Summit was able to have 50 percent of the auditing fees covered, allowing them to afford the training they needed to become ISO/TS 16949 certified.

CONNSTEP drew upon the experience of Vinay Shrikhande to assist Summit in reaching their certification goal. Shrikhande exceeded Summit's expectations. He not only uncovered problem areas and offered logical solutions; Shrikhande also educated Summit on the importance of measurement, planning and assisted in changing their company culture. "In most situations, auditors point out all of your faults, but never explain how to fix or prevent them," said Gross. He [Shrikhande] really wanted to see us succeed. It's a lot easier to grow in this business, when you have resources like CONNSTEP who are there to provide assistance through difficult periods," said Gross.

Summit Corporation of America
Thomaston, Connecticut
100 employees
www.scact.com

Quality Management Systems

- Registered to TS 16949 quality standard
- \$2 million increase in new sales
- 25% reduction in energy & electricity costs



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Shrikhande focused on the areas of effectiveness and efficiency within Summit while teaching the employees to focus on the positive. Using quality tools, Shrikhande taught Summit's management team how to delve deeper when issues arise. He also emphasized the importance of a continuous improvement culture, where identifying important problems before they become urgent is a priority. In order to ensure sustainability of the new quality practices, Shrikhande made several follow up visits to Summit, assessing progress and assisting with the incremental changes that were so vital to their success.

RESULTS

After becoming TS 16949 certified, Summit was able to attract new customers and increase new sales by more than \$2 million. According to Gross, "the lessons we've learned from CONNSTEP should be passed on to others in the business. The more we work on what we've learned, the more ingrained in our minds and in our business procedures it becomes." Gross feels that assisting others to obtain certification through CONNSTEP will solidify the customer/vendor relationship.

During the process of becoming TS 16949 certified, Summit began looking at the overall business process and examined their energy usage. They became aware of the amount of waste in their processes and implemented measures to decrease the amount of money spent on the remedial aspects of the manufacturing process. And by replacing light fixtures and installing new garage doors in the plant, Summit reduced energy and electricity costs by 25%.

To facilitate further improvements, a new computer system was installed, providing better access to all employees and improving data collection. "We started to measure everything," Gross states, "before the audit we had hundreds of charts that no one really knew what to do with and piles of data that no one wanted to sort through." The audit provided Summit with an education, "We realized that we don't need so many charts. We only need the charts that show us what we can improve, what we can change and

what we need to change before it's too late.

Gross is aware that Summit still has obstacles to overcome, but is confident that the new culture within the company positions Summit in a better situation for future growth and increase competitiveness. "The audit shifted our whole thought-process here at Summit. We reacted to problems as they arose. Now we've come to realize the need to find the root cause and address the errors before they occur," said Gross.

Instead of waiting for urgent pleas from suppliers, customers and employees, Summit now holds monthly meetings to discuss corrective actions and holds all employees responsible for implementing corrective actions. "In the end, we've shifted our way of thinking about leadership, business processes and operations, and we thank CONNSTEP whole-heartedly for opening our eyes and helping us to turn the company around."

"We truly got everything we needed because of a simple phone call from Ray Snyder," said Gross. Prior to that phone call, Summit's management staff was unaware of the depth of CONNSTEP's service offerings. Now that they are aware of the range of offerings, they are planning future engagements with CONNSTEP to continuously improve their company.

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