

Employees Are Key to Hy-Capacity's Success

Hy-Capacity, Inc., in Humboldt, Iowa, is a family-owned corporation that specializes in the manufacture and remanufacture of tractor components, including agricultural clutches, water pumps, and torque amplifiers. It has more than 140 employees in Humboldt plus a nationwide sales force. Steve Olson, president, describes his role as moving the company forward with new products and opportunities.

"This is a continuous journey," Olson says, "we have to keep redefining who we are as a company and keep reaching and growing." The addition of five new product lines plus a \$2 million expansion project are indicators of Hy-Capacity's success.

The employees are key players in that success, according to Cindy Danielson, general manager. "Our people are our greatest asset. We empower them to have ownership."

Hy-Capacity's investment in its employees begins with a methodical interview and orientation process. No matter the position, each new employee spends two weeks in each department to gain a thorough understanding of the company. In addition, training and professional development activities are routine.

Hy-Capacity Turns to CIRAS First

Hy-Capacity began working with CIRAS in 2002 and is the company's first resource, according to Danielson. "CIRAS is part of our culture and definitely part of our team." Training within Industry (TWI) is one of the programs Hy-Capacity values.

Jeff Mohr, CIRAS project manager, led 40 lead supervisors in TWI sessions. TWI consists of three core modules—job instruction, job methods, and job relations—with the goal of teaching skills needed by those responsible for the work of others.

Hy-Capacity also served as a pilot for the CIRAS Business Continuity Planning program for manufacturers led by Mike O'Donnell, project manager. The goal is to ensure that critical business functions are prepared to react to and recover from a disruption with minimum impact on the business.



"Hy-Capacity helped CIRAS develop this program," says Brenda Martin, CIRAS account manager. "It's a win-win situation. They gave us feedback on how to make this program more effective, and we provided the guidance and expertise to help them develop a very comprehensive plan."

Green Team Achieves Success

One of the ways Hy-Capacity empowers its employees is that everything is team driven. The company's effort to go green is a prime example.

"Lean manufacturing principles tell us that to successfully implement change you need to include everyone who is going to be affected by the change, upstream and downstream," Olson says. "We had regular meetings and everyone brought in their ideas."

The green initiative exceeded all expectations. Hy-Capacity became a zero-landfill company in 90 days. With the help of CIRAS and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Olson says that just about everything that used to be thrown away is now given away or sold.

Focus on the Future

While sales for Hy-Capacity have increased from \$6 million 15 years ago to \$25–\$28 million this year, Olson emphasizes that the company's philosophy is continuous improvement.

One current focus area is the sales force. "CIRAS helped us in the production area, and now we want to do the same thing with our sales force by providing additional training and bringing in more resources," Olson explains. "Increased sales will challenge the production area. It comes full circle so we will continually seek ways to meet and exceed the challenges in all of our areas."