

PMPA Member Swissline Precision Finds Success in Equipment Investment and Employee Training

In 1985, Dave Chenevert started Swissline Precision in a small garage in Millbury, Massachusetts, with little more than six mechanical cam-driven Swiss machines. Today, the company is a technologically advanced machine shop headquartered in Cumberland, Rhode Island, in a 36,000-square-foot facility with more than 60 machines. The company is currently the largest Tsgami CNC Swiss operation under one roof in North America and primarily serves the medical and aerospace industries. In 2016, Swissline Precision was purchased by Kirkwood Holding Inc., a leader in contract manufacturing, specializing in commutators, turned components, and assemblies.

"We try to be a one-stop shop for our customers," says Mike Chenevert, president of Swissline Precision. "If a customer comes to us and needs a part assembled, we can do a full assembly. We also do in-house laser marking, and we have a lot of local vendors we work with for heat-treat passivation plating and anodizing."

Mr. Chenevert strongly believes it's the company's investment in new machine tool technology that allows Swissline Precision to thrive. Swissline Precision is both ISO 9001:2008- and ISO 13485-certified, and its Swiss capability ranges from 0.5 millimeter to 38 millimeters in barstock capacity and can fulfill basic or advanced production parts, including milling, sculpting, micro drilling and conventional tapping. While Swissline primarily serves the medical and aerospace industries, it also serves a number of commercial applications, including computer, microwave connectors, hardware and marine components.

"We have our eggs in many baskets, which is what helped us in 2008 when many other companies were starting to struggle," Mr. Chenevert says. "When one market tanked, the others helped pull us along. Now, we're doing the same work with fewer people, so our focus has been efficiency."

Swissline Precision currently has 54 employees, all of whom are enrolled in an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP), which came to be after the company was purchased. The plan allows each employee to be a shareholder in the company, which Mr. Chenevert says helps incentivize employee growth and longevity. In addition to the company's ESOP program, Swissline Precision invests in its employees through a number of different training programs, including supplier training from its tool makers.

"We always try to build from the inside out and promote the people we have in-house," Mr. Chenevert says. "It's a nice



way to say thanks by giving them a plan to move forward in the company and give them growth opportunities."

As a PMPA member for almost a decade, Mr. Chenevert says it's the education and interaction from the organization's listserves that he finds to be one of the most helpful facets of Swissline's membership, because the listserves provide quick and easy access to information and answers to questions.

"It's a trustworthy organization filled with people who know the industry well and want to help any way they can," Mr. Chenevert says. "If you have a question about a spec and don't have days to wait for a vendor to get back to you, a metallurgist on the listserve can answer the question immediately. Any time you have a question, someone is there to answer, because everyone is going through the same issues and wants to help."

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