



Technical Member Profile: New Dimension Metals Corp.



New Dimension Metals Corp. (NDM) is a supplier of cold-finished carbon and alloy steel bar products. The company was founded in 1990 in Dayton, Ohio, by John C. Gray, who has spent his entire career in the steel business.

Mr. Gray started the bar mill as an alternative to what he considered the "big steel" mentality among the steel establishment. According to Mr. Gray, the old steel culture focused on only a single dimension that put the steel industry first.

His vision was to create a new dimension in providing cold-finished steel bars. This new dimension would put customers first and concentrate solely on those customers' needs. As a result, NDM offers a variety of

materials and lengths designed to meet the requirements of end users. The name "New Dimension Metals" embodies this vision and the company's motto, "To run our business more like our customers and less like the competition."

NDM also provides value-added, first-operation processes, such as saw-cutting or shearing-to-length, chamfering and packaging. Other services include hot-roll bar straightening, turning, polishing, thermal treatment, annealing and custom bundling. The company has 40 employees and is certified to ISO 9002.

As part of Gray America Corp., NDM shares a total of 340,000 square feet with three sister companies: A-Lab Corp., L&H Threaded Rods and Scarlet & Gray Corp. In total, there are 125

employees under one roof.

NDM currently has seven cold-drawing lines. The mill can cold-draw any carbon and alloy steel grade that is produced by hot-rolled bar mills. The company works with both standard and special grades, and maintains

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an inventory that includes 10xx, 11xx, 12xx, 4140 and 8620 steel.

NDM's bar products include 1/4-inch to 4-inch rounds, 7/16-inch to 2-inch squares, 5/16-inch to 2-3/4-inch hexagons and 1/2-inch by 1-inch to 1-inch by 4-inch flats. Special shapes are also available upon request.

"Our customers supply parts to a variety of markets, such as automotive, agriculture and lawn and garden," says Mike Mulligan, the company's sales manager since 1994. "We also sell some of our bars to OEMs, as well as to the service center industry.



"We're a material supplier to PMPA member shops," Mr. Mulligan continues. "Precision

(Continued on next page)



Why Is This Here?

By Miles Free, Director, Industry Research and Technology

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Member Profile...continued

machining companies are a big part of our market. We got to know many of our current customers through our technical membership in PMPA."

Mr. Mulligan credits many of his customer relationships to PMPA's networking opportunities. "You really get to know your customers on a personal level at the association meetings and conferences," he explains. "It's much better than doing business by phone, fax and e-mail.

"I like the exposure to some of the members' best practices," he continues. "Even though we're in a different industry, there are many things we can learn from the best people in the PMPA. We try to emulate some of those practices."

Mr. Mulligan, who currently serves on the PMPA Technical Program Committee, is a user of the PMPA Listserves. "I contribute when there's something that relates to carbon and alloy steel, which is our business," he says. "I try to give an answer when I can. If there's something that our sister company, A-Lab, can help a member with, I try to offer those services as well.

"There are customers we wouldn't have without PMPA membership," Mr. Mulligan sums up. "I think PMPA members try to support the technical members and favor them with their business when it makes sense. There are definitely customers that value the fact that we are PMPA members."

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Why is this here? Will I use it this minute? Will I use it this hour? Will I use it this shift? Will I use it today? Why is this here?

These questions are one of two essential principles to help you establish "Lean" in your operations. It is a principle that will work regardless of whether your shop is low-variety, high-volume (LVHV—like Toyota Lean) or high-variety, low-volume (HVLV—like most job shops).

The other principle, "Relentlessly eliminate waste," is the better-known principle. It tells you what needs to be done. But asking "Why is this here?" shows you how to eliminate waste. It is the essential question to ask when removing clutter from workspaces, thereby reducing potential variability and restoring your operations to the essentials needed for control and visual management.

Why is this here? This question used to be the province of the industrial engineer. A company's industrial engineers would plan the set-up of an operation, calculate standard work and determine the best layout for production. I have not seen an IE in any contract shop, nor in the plants of our OEM customers in many, many years.

In order to get "lean and mean" or "right sized," most executive managers eliminated such non-essential luxury positions as industrial engineers. So facilities got bloated with substandard layouts. And by not having standard work, more and more extra "stuff" was brought into the production environment. With foremen, crew or team leaders all overburdened by just keeping our shops on schedule, the idea of keeping work areas optimized for production has taken a back seat to the urgencies of the moment.

Why is this here? Will I use it this minute? This is the question to ask when you look at a production workspace. (Creative workspaces are different.) The most expensive real estate is the limited square footage at the workstation where the employee and process interface. Any material, equipment or other tangibles that are not needed to accomplish the task are obstacles and create a sub-optimum environment for accomplishing the work at that time and place.

Why is this here? Will I use it this hour? Will I use it this shift? Tools, gages and equipment that are used regularly but not as a part of every operator task should be near at hand, but not jammed into an area where they are in the way. A visually marked place to hold the tool will help assure that it gets returned once it has completed its task.

The idea of keeping our work areas optimized for production has taken a back seat to the urgencies of the moment.

Why is this here? Will I use it today? If the resource is only used once a day, that's a likely signal that it might be shared and used by others. So, finding the best place for it (rather than just leaving it where it happened to be used last) will optimize for the entire organization. The time spent by others searching for a shared resource is an unrecoverable loss to the company.

Why is this here? If the answer is anything other than "because it is needed to help perform the job at hand better, safer or with better quality," then the item should be removed.