

Bennett Tool & Die Co. Recognized for Vision, Leadership

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■ The Company

Bennett Tool & Die Co., a relatively small, Tenn.-based manufacturer of metal stamping dies suddenly found itself thrust into the spotlight in 2000. That year, the Nashville-based company was the recipient of two highly prestigious industry awards: the first, the 2000 Technology & Business Awards, presented jointly by Start Magazine and Microsoft Corporation®; and the second, the 2000 Enterprise Integration Awards, presented and sponsored by Software Strategies Magazine.

Why the sudden tributes for a company that had been in business in the same location for more than 50 years? Very simply, the awards recognized the innovative strategies that the company had recently adopted to make it more highly competitive in a changing industry. Bennett Tool’s progressive management saw the need to change and adopt new technology to achieve new levels of growth in a highly dynamic marketplace.

“The willingness of Bennett’s management to look at, adopt and drive new technologies to better itself as a company, better its products and better service its customers is a testament to vision and forward thinking.”

- Joey Benadretti
 President, SYSPRO

Start Magazine in cooperation with Microsoft Corporation presents the Technology & Business Awards annually to recognize “industry leaders in manufacturing.” To be eligible, a company must utilize Microsoft Windows®-based technology to achieve its corporate goals and strategies. Winners are selected in several industry categories by an independent panel of industry research experts based upon a company’s use of “technological resources, strategies and tactics to overcome business challenges.” Bennett Tool & Die Co., Inc. was chosen as exemplifying the progressive thinking that continues to make American industry the world’s standard.

■ The Challenge

Several years ago company President Jeff Bennett realized that his firm’s growth was predicated on its ability to adapt to the needs of a changing market – a market characterized by a growing base of original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) employing the just-in-time (JIT) manufacturing concept. Firms were no longer willing to order parts from job shops and wait for them to be produced and shipped. Bennett realized that its customer base was increasingly turning to suppliers who maintained the needed parts in stock with the ability to ship them when and as needed.

Bennett realized that the paradigm shift to a make-to-stock concept serving just-in-time manufacturers required his company to “walk a fine line.” The firm

■ AT A GLANCE ■

COMPANY

Bennett Tool & Die Co., Inc.

INDUSTRY

Die Cast Manufacturing

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

75

THE CHALLENGE

- Rapid growth
- Changing customer demands
- Shift in manufacturing mode
- Inefficient forecasting
- Limited accounting capabilities
- Inaccurate costing data

SOLUTION & SERVICES

- Fully integrated ERP
- Bar coding
- Automated data transfer
- Accounting controls
- Scalable to changing size, mode
- Sophisticated, customized interfaces

THE BENEFITS

- Higher planning efficiency
- Streamlined work order procedures
- Lower manufacturing costs
- Faster order turnaround
- Accurate, real-time financials
- Improved customer service





had to be able to accurately predict the needs of customers to maintain stocks of parts for immediate shipment. Moreover, maintaining too much inventory could jeopardize cash flow and profits. Wisely, Bennett realized that the answer was sophisticated computer technology to provide the means to predict and anticipate orders as well as maintain strict controls over all facets of the operation.

■ The Solution

Bennett turned to a local computer-consulting firm, Cmax, Inc. Working together, Cmax and Bennett came up with an integrated software approach to enable it to handle the complexities faced by a predominantly make-to-stock manufacturer. The solution, consisting of enterprise resource planning software from Costa Mesa, Calif.-based SYSPRO, Inc., and Microsoft Windows technology running on personal computers, gives the company total control over all facets of the manufacturing, accounting, and distribution operations. It allows the company to formulate bids based on the most accurate cost data as well as to plan and schedule production efficiently and accurately to meet customer demands. In addition, the solution lets Bennett capitalize on the Web to interface with customers, and, most importantly, conduct business from a base of knowledge rather than “gut feel.”

■ The Result

Today, Bennett captures bar code data and transmits it from the factory floor data directly into SYSPRO for processing. In addition, mechanized inputs to job cost and payroll (ABRA), AutoCAD, very sophisticated interfaces into word processing, spread sheets and email produce a high impact system approach that supports ISO 9000 work, detailed work order procedures and planning. Similarly, the firm employs powerful state-of-the art robotic welding, machine tool control, and all the “right stuff” to speed error-free production and lower manufacturing costs. Once a simple job shop, today Bennett Tool & Die is a highly successful, make-to-stock manufacturer and a major contributor to the Nashville, Tennessee economy.

Said Judge Dick Slansky, senior analyst, ARC Advisory Group, in voting for Bennett as the recipient of the Start/

Microsoft award, “Bennett exemplifies the vision to see a need for a complete paradigm shift and the willingness to adopt and embrace technology that represented a radical departure from the old business model.” Only two months prior, Software Strategies Magazine, a Putman Publishing publication, selected Bennett Tool & Die as the winner of its “Discrete Manufacturer of the Year Award”. The award is one of several presented annually to outstanding manufacturers by Software Strategies to recognize manufacturers who have “demonstrated the most outstanding integration of enterprise-level software in order to streamline their business processes.” Honors are presented to the exceptional manufacturer in each of the following categories: discrete manufacturing; process manufacturing; plant floor-to-enterprise; and enterprise-to-supply chain integration.

In selecting Bennett Tool & Die for honors in the Discrete Manufacturing category, one of the judges, Kevin Prouty, Senior Research Analyst, AMR Research, noted, as reported in the July 2000 issue of Software Strategies, “My choice is Bennett Tool & Die. They are a small company that is transitioning itself into the e-business world. They are a good example of a company that crosses the gap between a company that operates in a paper-bound manual system to a company that operates as an agile manufacturer.”

According to the Software Strategies, “The SYSPRO implementation has put Bennett Tool & Die on the cutting edge of technology and given it a competitive edge.” Jeff Bennett, President, Bennett Tool & Die Co., said of the recognition, “I am honored that Bennett Tool & Die was selected for these awards. It is a good feeling when a system works, but there is added satisfaction when your efforts are recognized. The real credit goes to the people who never doubted that we would succeed.”

Joey Benadretti, President of SYSPRO USA, noted, “Bennett is a classic example of a company’s need to adapt to a changing market in order to accommodate growth. The willingness of Bennett’s management to look at, adopt and drive new technologies to better itself as a company, better its products and better service its customers is a testament to vision and forward thinking.”