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Metal cutter can make what buyer dreams up

By Mike Boyer
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The sound of the Minster stamping press spitting out metal door brackets from a spool of 24-inch carbon steel is music to Dan Cunningham.

"I just love that sound," the president and owner of Long-Stanton Manufacturing Co. says as he walks across the shop floor of his metal stamping and sheet metal fabrication company.

When the 30-ton Minster press is pumping out parts at ear-splitting regularity, it means Long-Stanton is on its way to filling its customers' needs and meeting productivity and sales goals. That's vital for Long-Stanton, an old-line company that started making metal tokens in Cincinnati during the Civil War.

In the last five years, the company, which employs 55, has embraced modern manufacturing practices such as lean manufacturing and continuous improvement.

The new approaches and new markets have helped Long-Stanton meet what Cunningham calls the "white-hot competition" in manufacturing.



This machine, a Finn Power Flexible Manufacturing Center, is one of the new fittings that allows the company to stay competitive.
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concept home being built outside Los Angeles.

The multimillion-dollar home built by prominent Los Angeles lawyer Edward A. Landry and his wife makes extensive use of AglION, a steel coating of silver ions that crush microbes and other germs.



Long-Stanton produced a 6,000-bottle wine rack that's headed for a house in California. Company president Dan Cunningham points out details to sales manager John Backscheider (center) and general manager Tom Kachovec (right).

(Michael Snyder photos)
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Wednesday, the company will hold a customer open house to show off one of its more unusual projects: a 6,000-bottle metal wine rack made from AK Steel's new AglION anti-microbial stainless steel.

The \$100,000 metal wine rack will stretch around most of a 15-foot-by-30-foot wine cellar in Camino de Robles, an 11,000-square-foot

Cunningham said he got interested in AgION after he learned AK Steel was marketing the product. He ordered some and began stamping out electric switch plates as samples. That led to the wine rack contract.

Long-Stanton doesn't have a product line. Rather, it stamps, cuts and punches metal parts for a variety of manufacturers of entry and garage doors and air compressors.

The company is using the wine rack project to showcase a new \$1 million sheet-metal cutting machine used to complete the project.

The company has also expanded into contract manufacturing - taking a customer's equipment and setting up a dedicated manufacturing cell in Long-Stanton's 66,000-square-foot plant.

Making the components "is a pain for them, but it's gold for us," he said.

U.S. manufacturing has been in a tailspin for several years.

"What it means is only the best will survive and the best have to be constantly getting better," said Cunningham, 49, a former GE plastics engineer who joined Long-Stanton in 1981 at the urging of his father-in-law, who was then co-owner.

"When I came here, it was a different world," he said. "A customer would call up and say, 'Can you make this part?' I'd look at it and say, 'Sure we can make it.'

"Now it's all about process. That's why the culture of continuous improvement, always striving to get better, is so crucial. It's all about making sure that not only do you do what the customer wants, but you have to be improving before the customer asks," he said.

Long-Stanton has totally redesigned its plant layout, moving machines to make it easier bring in raw materials and remove finished components.

Employees now monitor their performance each hour.

"Our production guys have a goal every hour. And it's somewhat aggressive. Every hour, they calculate: 'Did I make the goal?' (If they didn't), they write down the No. 1 reason why they didn't make the goal. And that's the thing we attack," he said.

The efforts are paying off.

"Our sales increased 12 percent last year. And our plan is 15 percent this year. We're actually a tad ahead of that."

The company increased productivity 22 percent last year. Product quality improved and safety and on-time delivery goals were met, he said.

Long-Stanton has sales of about \$10 million and Cunningham wants to double that over the next five years.

Cunningham said it took a while for the continuous improvement culture to become imbedded at Long-Stanton, but employees have made it work.

"It becomes like breathing after a while. Our guys have done everything asked of them," he said.

Long-Stanton Manufacturing Co. will offer a peek at a \$100,000 metal wine rack it fabricated at a customer open house Wednesday from 10:30 a.m. to noon at its plant, 9388 Sutton Place, West Chester.

For more information on the event, open to customers and potential customers, call Linda Grow at 874-8020.

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