

“The New Industrial Revolution”: A customer, an idea and EJ Ajax

“I’ve always been a camp chef kind of guy,” Chris Weyandt said. He and his wife took groups to the Boundary Waters, and Weyandt usually hauled along a Coleman box grill, he said, “because I loved the structure.” After one trip, he thought, “There’s got to be a way to have the structure of a grill without this big box.”

Weyandt started his company, called Slatgrill, in September and wanted to have a product in time for the Midwest Mountaineering Outdoor Expo right before Thanksgiving.

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Meet the 2013-2014 EJ Ajax Scholarship Recipients

In the June issue of the newsletter, we told you about the EJ Ajax Scholarship program at Dunwoody College. The scholarships are awarded each year to two second-year students in the manufacturing program, who also have the opportunity to intern at EJ Ajax during the summer and part-time during the school year.

The first year’s scholarships were a huge success, enabling us to bring two talented graduates on full-time. So of course we decided to offer the program for a second year.

This year’s recipients, like many of Dunwoody’s students, have substantial work experience behind them and a strong desire to establish a challenging and rewarding career ladder.



Steve Berguetski

Steve owned his own bath and remodeling business, so he knows first-hand how quality and on-time delivery contribute to profitability and customer satisfaction. With 11 years of work experience, he came to EJ Ajax

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His first thought was EJ Ajax and Sons, where his brother Dick is a tool and die maker. Dick introduced Chris to Don Wellman, Key Account Representative. Wellman recalled, “EJ Ajax did not have the equipment to do the work for him. We directed him to sources we were currently using and who Ajax had great relationships with.”

The initial Slatgrill, made of stainless steel, was a huge hit at the Midwest Mountaineering show. Duluth Pack picked up the product, which they dubbed “the product for 2012.” Weyandt produced a backpacker version in titanium, which weighed in at just 1.4 pounds.

The next step was a product at a lower price point. By then, EJ Ajax had its fiber optic laser up and running. The Slatgrill Scout, made of anodized aluminum, retails for \$89.

For the second generation of the Slatgrill, Weyandt wanted to combine titanium and stainless. “As we were trying to figure this out on his desk, Don in his wisdom came up with an H clip. There were no moving parts, no bends. It was easy to clean. The coupling clip not only



What's Cooking?

“I love grilled food, cooked on an open fire,” Weyandt said. “Fresh fish on a griddle is always good. What I liked about the Coleman box is that I could put a rolled steel griddle on it and make hashbrowns, eggs, walleye. Now with the Slatgrill, I can use it with gas but also use fire or charcoal. I can harvest oak right on site and get that wonderful wood fire taste.”

allowed us to join panels but also stack or adjoin units, and use the same clips as elevated legs,” Weyandt said.

Wellman recalled, “We made several revisions with materials, dimensions, gage reductions, and adding features to produce today’s version. Knowing Chris’s desire to constantly improve his product and become more innovative, I’m sure we will have more exciting

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Lifelong Learning

For colleagues at EJ Ajax, training and education are a commitment that lasts throughout their careers.

Colleagues who have recently achieved education and training milestones include:

Carmelita Hoppenrath, who received her Class A Journeyworker certificate from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. This nationally recognized certification includes 8,000 hours of on-the-job training of hours of classroom instruction. Carmelita also passed the skills assessments for the Class A Journeyworker certificate determined by the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS).



From left to right, Toua Thao, Emily Cramble, Cornett Edwards, Dave Schaenzer, Riley Beardsley, Carmelita Hoppenrath, Joe Brudzinski, Dylan King, Joe Budzinski.

Dave Schaenzer and Toua Thao, who earned welding certificates from Dunwoody College. Their certifications will help enable EJ Ajax to align the professional standards for welding with those of our other core capabilities.

Joe Brudzinski, who completed his AAS Degree at Dunwoody College in May, has entered the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Apprenticeship program. He has also begun a two-year welding program at Hennepin Technical College. Emily Carmble is a certified first responder who graduated at the top of her class in the precision sheet metal program at Anoka Technical College.

Pat Patterson, Dylan King and, Riley Beardsley, who have begun a two-year Machine Tool program at Hennepin Technical College.

Congratulations to these and all of our colleagues whose commitment to learning keeps Ej Ajax strong and competitive!

New Print and Online Case Studies Available

It isn't what we do—it's how we do it. Many of the products EJ Ajax produces for clients are common enough—hinges, brackets, casings. Our uncommon experience in material selection, tooling and design engineering is what enables us to deliver value to our customers.

Three new case studies, now in print, show how we partner with our customers to provide innovative solutions for

Innovative Supply Chain Solutions

Two Cities manufacturer Radco Truck developed a product that enables contractors to finish a road "all night on the job site. The customer contracted with EJ Ajax to design, tooling and perform stamping operations. EJ Ajax shipped the product back to the customer for handling, crimping, packaging and shipping.

The process required three to four employees at Radco Truck and an operator on an machine at EJ Ajax. From one to three—eliminating 40 percent of parts back and forth—the process took a month.

"A big customer can order 15,000 to 20,000 ft. of track at a time," said Rick Kerthback, Radco Truck president. "The product produces between the customer's order and the required delivery date we had a long exposure inventory on hand."

An product demand grew. EJ Ajax defined methods to produce the entire part, package and ship it directly from the plant. "Now, EJ Ajax handles us to make the product until it reaches the order. All new value-added lead time and inventory has been eliminated," Kerthback said. "The ability to start over production has enabled Radco Truck to manage significant growth without having to worry about supporting customer demand from financial standpoints. Overall from a low, and our cash flow is not tied up in storing finished goods."

Order placed by 11:00 a.m. are manufactured, packaged and shipped by the end of the day. While demand has grown to meet the customer's increased market share, quality has remained at 99.9%.

Solution: EJ Ajax delivered these results for Radco Truck every phase in the supply chain. Contact us for innovative manufacturing solutions we can work for. Phone: 763.875.1000 Email: info@ejajax.com www.ejajax.com

Optimizing the supply chain

Supporting the product lifecycle from prototype to full roll-out

Innovative Solutions Throughout the Product Lifecycle

As EJ Ajax, we are proud of the long standing relationship we have with our customer. We maintain these relationships with outstanding quality and on-time delivery. In addition, we continue to find new solutions that meet with innovative approaches to design and material selection. Our innovative approach has kept us globally competitive, supporting a third of our production in China, the Caribbean and the Middle East.

At the beginning of their lifecycle, EJ Ajax can provide rapid prototyping and design services. Our three-axis laser cutting and 3-axis press brakes offer quick quality and cost-effective alternatives to costly tooling.

As product demand and market share grows, EJ Ajax can often find a way to move from fabrication to a progressive stamping process to increase the direct cost.

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EJ Ajax Extrusion

Competitor Extrusion

Globally Competitive Innovation and Productivity

Some manufacturers assume that producing parts off-shore is always the way to save cost. At EJ Ajax, we're proving that's not the case. Our global capabilities provide productivity, innovation and quality solving the most onerous parts cost competition. And when you add outstanding quality and on-time delivery. Made in the U.S.A. is the best solution for the bottom line on projects like these:

Grounding Bracket

Our customer initially tried manufacturing this bracket in China. The Chinese manufacturer couldn't produce the part to print. In fact, we use a vacuum system to remove it from the progressive die. The part has to provide enough spring to prevent a circuit on the enclosure.

EJ Ajax produced the part to print, and we use a Minnesota-based source for laser cutting and plating. The results: The customer got the desired quality and save shipping expense through a considerably shortened supply chain.

Safety Bracket

Our customer came to EJ Ajax because they had challenges building performance in aluminum brackets with specific needs. It is a safety component on a consumer small appliance in the kitchen. We designed a strengthening process that let the part work harder, while maintaining dimensional integrity within .5".

Major Appliance Part

Our customer had requested these parts in China, but the suppliers were creating due to problems with material selection and the angle in the manufacturing part. After we re-worked one order of Chinese-manufactured parts, the customer moved manufacturing over to us.

Now our customer is expanding into a global market, and EJ Ajax will be shipping to assembly plants in both the U.S. and in Mexico.

Solution: If you're considering sending production offshore, or if you're not satisfied with the quality of your offshore parts, give us a call. We'll work with you to determine your supply chain. Phone: 763.875.1000 Email: info@ejajax.com www.ejajax.com

Making "Made in the U.S.A." globally competitive

If you haven't seen our case studies, please call or email for a copy.

You can also browse the "Value Engineering" portfolio on our website for more examples of innovative solutions to customer challenges.

EJ Ajax Recognized With The 2013 Above And Beyond Award from the Minnesota National Guard and Reserve



Pictured from left to right in adjoining photo are Minnesota ESGR State Chair Paul Monteen, Sergeant Vincent Montez, Erick Ajax, Brigadier General Alton (Al) G. Berry and Major General Richard C. Nash.

FAQ:

Q:

"How do I choose the best finishing option for stainless steel parts?"

A:

We can provide customers with a range of finishing options depending on the cost and use of the part.

- Laser-cut parts can be either raw or lightly oiled and are a cost-effective solution when handling and aesthetics aren't primary criteria. Turret-cut parts can also be delivered lightly oiled.
- We recommend deburring for any part that will be handled in assembly.
- Parts that will be highly visible in the final assembly can be electropolished for a chrome-like look.
- Any part that needs U/L certification or that is used in food processing will need to be passivated to remove all traces of iron from the surface and prevent rusting.

On any new quote or order, we work with our customers to select the optimal finish for the part's intended use.

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with more than 500 hours on mills and lathes, 100 hours of CNC, and solid blueprint reading skills. He completed his first year at Dunwoody with a 4.0 GPA, and he scored a 98 percent on the PMA mechanical aptitude test.

With that kind of background, Steve obviously was able to start creating value from day 1 of his internship. During the first half of the summer, he got several hundred hours of experience running complex progressive tools. In the second half of his internship, he shifted gears and worked in the tool room, running CNC mills and lathes, and in the press room running parts on the tools he worked on. We know those experiences will serve him well during his second year in the machine tool program at Dunwoody.

Nick Jepson



Nick's background is in production scheduling and purchasing, and he owned his own shipping company for 15 years. He decided to shift to a new career, taking two years out of his life to build a new skill set through the Dunwoody program in Engineering, Drafting and Design.

Nick spent the first half of his internship in sheet metal fabrication, bending, cutting and forming metal. In the second half of his internship, he worked with master fabricator Del Durham, who mentored him on CNC sheet metal cutting. He also worked with sales engineer Dan McGee, who coached him on programming skills. Nick will continue to work half-time during the school year. His availability to program in the evening will enable his colleagues on the day shift to hit the ground running on customer jobs every morning.

Meetings and Presentations

Closing the Skills Gap

Senator Al Franken and Erick Ajax held a conference with Twin Cities media to talk about the employment challenges facing Twin Cities companies, and the "Community College to Career Fund Act," which Senator Franken has iproposed to help close the skills gap. Listen to the conference: <http://kfai.org/news/2013/07/37136>

Apprenticeships for the 21st Century

Erick Ajax talked with KFAI reporter Lennie Chism about apprenticeships as an alternative to four-year degrees. www.tcdailyplanet.net/news/2013/06/10/business-leader-ej-ajax-says-four-year-college-not-everyone-offers-manufacturing-app

STEM Careers

Carmelita Hoppenrath was featured on Fox 9 News for her decision to use apprenticeship as the path to a STEM career. www.myfoxtwincities.com/story/22582102/local-manufacturer-offers-apprenticeships-for-valuable-stem-careers

Veterans Job Fair

On July 18, Erick Ajax, along with colleagues Jose Chavarría and Pat Patterson, attended the Minnesota Veterans Job Fair. More than 100 businesses and more than 1000 veterans attended. Dozens of veterans stopped by the booth, and follow-up interviews were scheduled with eight highly qualified veterans. Stay tuned for information about our new hires

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improvements to work on with him as his products gain popularity in the camping marketplace."

Weyandt is currently working with EJ Ajax on yet another line extension for Slatgrill. Meanwhile, his products have gotten buzz everywhere from the Wall Street Journal to Adventure Cyclist.

"This is the new industrial revolution," Weyandt said. "People working in garages built some of the first prototypes of computers. Now you have people who have access to Fab Labs and manufacturing partners like EJ Ajax. What I like about my approach is that I have a very intimate supply chain that's 10 miles from my home. China and other parts of the world make great stuff, but you have to order 10,000 units and it's two months away before you get it. That's a lot of risk."

Weyandt has appreciated the ability to order in quantities of 100 to 150 so far. He's currently working on wholesale distribution, and with help from EJ Ajax, he said, "I'll be able to churn these things out like crazy. "