

AUTOMATION AND FORWARD THINKING LEAD TO SUCCESS

CGI Automated Manufacturing, Inc.



ROMEOVILLE, IL

Brother and sister Jan Nieman and Gary Gurzynski know that going the extra mile can sometimes win you the race. As co-owners of CGI Automated Manufacturing, Inc., they recognize that while not all sheet metal fabrication requires state-of-the-art machining technologies and automation systems, employing these innovations can foster long-term success and growth.



CGI is widely regarded as the most technologically advanced contract manufacturer in the Midwest. It is the first company in the nation to operate two Mitsubishi 3015NX laser machines in conjunction with the Mitsubishi River Navigation System. The combination is an automation powerhouse that allows CGI to eliminate unnecessary steps in the work-flow process, improve materials utilization and reduce costs—savings that they pass along to customers.

"To expand and excel the way we wanted to, automation technology was crucial," says Nieman. "The Mitsubishi River System is an integral part in fulfilling our growth strategies."

A HISTORY OF INNOVATION

CGI started as a stamping operation, and soon expanded into fabrication, including laser cutting, CNC punching, forming, welding, assembly and more. More than 30 years later, the company has grown to 35 employees and works with customers in a wide variety of industries—from storage vault enclosures to electric utility frame assemblies.

Nieman and Gurzynski recognize that a large part of the company's success has been management's ability to leverage the latest

technologies and processes as a means of adapting to changing demands, economic situations and industry needs.

To keep up with increased demand in the '90s and expand into other markets, CGI needed to create more optimized material handling and storage systems, and the answer was automation.

"We were looking for ways to be faster and more efficient," says Nieman. "It was at this time that we first seriously considered automating our shop floor."

In fact, CGI was one of the first companies in the Midwest to install a CNC punching cell with a six-shelf tower.

They also saw a need to compete as more and more customers turned to lower-cost, foreign fabricators.

"Companies that didn't have time to wait for their parts to be shipped from overseas came to CGI because of our short lead times," says Gurzynski.

Over the next several years, CGI began integrating automation into its manufacturing processes. An ERP System was installed that seamlessly integrated shop information into CGI's scheduling and costing system.

"Once we began to integrate technologies that automated our shop floor, we were excited by the capabilities and the prospects for improving product quality and lowering or holding the line on production costs to the customer," says Gurzynski.

A MOVE, AN UPGRADE AND ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFICATION

In January 2009, CGI relocated to a new 62,500 square-foot manufacturing facility in the rapidly growing industrial area of Romeoville, Ill. With the move came a technology and machinery upgrade: CGI acquired two Mitsubishi 3015NX laser machines, which work with Mitsubishi's River Navigation System, and a new shop-floor infrastructure. Two five-ton overhead cranes move materials, while an eight-tower, 92-shelf material storage system provides ample space for raw material storage.

Even though it's been less than two years since the Mitsubishi system was put in place, Gurzynski and Nieman say they've already experienced the benefits. They enjoy the speed and sophisticated, user-friendly technology of Mitsubishi's NX lasers, as well as low operating costs.

Most importantly, the River Navigation System and its Ncell software

eliminates storage, material handling and staffing issues, and bring CGI to a new era of fabrication efficiency and control.

"The system's software has delivered a lot of value," says Gurzynski. "It provides real-time cost reporting and materials and inventory measurements, which eliminate the time-consuming task of manual evaluations. Plus, it makes last-minute production and work-flow changes manageable."

"The River Navigation System helps improve the flow of our materials, as well as our workers and data, so we're as productive and lean as we can possibly be," adds Nieman. "For our customers, this improved materials utilization and labor reduction means the lowest parts costs with the highest throughput."

The flexibility of the River Navigation System setup allowed Mitsubishi's automation experts to develop a customized floor plan that not only optimizes CGI's operations, but also allows for future growth.

"We made this investment with an eye on expansion," explains Gurzynski.

This year, CGI also became ISO 9001:2008 certified, and Gurzynski says that the process of working toward ISO certification has made CGI an even stronger company.

TOP-NOTCH SERVICE LEADS TO HAPPY CUSTOMERS

Nieman and Gurzynski aren't the only ones that see the merit in CGI's commitment to innovation. In 2009, one of the company's customers—Focal Point, a Chicago-based lighting systems manufacturer—nominated CGI for the Excellent Supplier Award from the American Purchasing Society. CGI was one of two companies to win the award—and the only U.S.-based company to do so.

In response to the win, Tricia Kerns, Material Manager at Focal Point, told *Fabricating and Metalworking* magazine that CGI has "maintained a nearly perfect delivery and quality record," and says she is pleased that CGI's exemplary service was recognized.

"Of course we were thrilled by the award," says Nieman. "But the real gratification comes from knowing that we have the tools and systems in place to solve our customers' challenges and really deliver for them."

