

## BUSINESS PROBLEM

A start-up machining business needs customers. How can you find work when you can't afford to hire a sales force and wait for them to uncover business opportunities?

## SOLUTION

In 2004, Joe Mattes and a partner started TR Manufacturing in Garrett, IN as a machine shop specializing in close-tolerance machining and quick turn-around for short and medium production runs. Right from the start, their strategy was to use the MFG.com online marketplace as the primary source of business. "We knew we couldn't afford a sales person," Mattes says, "cold calling is tough to do. It's unproductive and time consuming. So we built our business plan around marketing through the Internet. We found MFG.com through a web search and it was just what we needed."

Through the MFG.com online marketplace, Mattes is able to find prospective customers that he knows need something done. "It's not a matter of finding a company that can use the kind of parts we make and hoping they need some machining work at some point." All of TR Manufacturing's major customers started out as contract awards on MFG.com.

TR Manufacturing has secured work in a variety of industries including aerospace, heavy industry and medical, all over the U.S. "We have done particularly well with companies on both coasts," he says. "It seems that their local suppliers have high overhead and just can't be priced

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**-Joe Mattes**

*VP of Manufacturing, TR Manufacturing*

competitive any more. Here in the mid-west our overhead is lower so we can give them a good price even with the shipping costs." One customer used to do all of the machining themselves but their costs got too high. Now they contract the work out to firms like TR through MFG.com. "We're in the heart of automotive country," Mattes adds, "but that industry has too many ups and downs. We decided to stay away from it."

Mattes is on the MFG.com web site every day. "I don't 'look for work' every day," he says. "but I like to keep track of what's going on. If I see something that looks right for us, I'll submit a quote." His primary interest is in filling out the shop schedule a couple of weeks in the future. "Most of our jobs are two weeks' lead-time or less so that's what I look for in requests for proposals

on the site.”

While its success rate is only in the single digits, most of the contracts awarded to TR Manufacturing on MFG.com result in more than the one sale. “About 75 to 80% of the companies we do work for through MFG.com become repeat customers,” Mattes says.

TR Machining specializes in small lot production – typically 1 to 50 pieces, but will take on larger lots at times, especially for turned parts. Tight tolerances, high-precision, and quick turn-around are distinguishing characteristics of the work they do best. Aluminum, plastics, high grade titanium and other exotic metals make up a majority of the materials used.

### ABOUT TR MANUFACTURING

Based in Garrett, IN, TR Manufacturing is a full-service machine shop offering close-tolerance machining services on a wide range of materials including aluminum, plastics, high-grade titanium, and exotic metals. Small lot quantities and short turn-around are company specialties.

Mattes has good things to say about the MFG.com web site and their customer service. “The site is really easy to use,” he says. “I really haven’t had much reason to call customer service but when I have called, the support has been terrific.”

Mattes keeps a close eye on his company’s supplier ratings, as he feels they are an important part of assuring the buyer that they can feel comfortable doing business with TR. “Of the 200 or so awards we have gotten, only one or two of the ratings were less than 4.5 or 5 stars,” he says. “We try hard to make sure the customer is happy so we can keep our rating high.”

### BENEFITS

- Effective and affordable source of business for a new and growing company
- Ample supply of work – companies that need the services TR has to offer
- Good opportunity to display capabilities – leads to repeat business
- Easy-to-use site with great customer support