

## **After a Rough Start, Patriot Foundry & Castings Achieves Success Through NH MEP's Business Growth Collaborative Program**

### **Company Background:**

It was 2008 and Chris Leuteritz, Owner/Manager of Patriot Foundry & Castings remembers it well, "For years my wife Debbi and I worked as engineers and felt it was time to buy a small business of our own. We purchased a foundry specializing in nonferrous metal casting. Little did we know the company had serious obstacles to overcome."

The previous owner had a mentality of do everything for everybody, regardless if it was best for the company or not. "We originally had 30 – 40 customers who weren't necessarily the right fit for our businesses. This stretched and strained our company which led to product quality, consistency and delivery issues, and many upset customers," said Leuteritz.

Chris and Debbi worked quickly to convert their facility into a 10,000 square foot state-of-the-art casting operation. They invested heavily into the company's infrastructure and replaced or repaired almost every major piece of equipment. Most importantly, they dramatically improved product quality, consistency and delivery times.

Today Patriot Foundry & Castings produces nonferrous castings for large and small companies in a variety of industries. These include aerospace, automotive, biotech, electronics, firefighting, food services, imaging, instrumentation, lighting, marine/dock hardware, material handling, medical, packaging, power/hand tools, statuary services and water services.

Finding out how to solve customer problems became their sweet spot. "Sales have more than doubled from when we started. We now have 8 employees and are looking to hire more. We even subcontract some of our business to a network of 7 other foundries," Leuteritz said. Best of all, later in 2017 they plan to move into a 12,000 – 15,000 square foot space with room to grow.

### **Situation:**

From the start, Chris and Debbi knew they needed a more solid and secure customer base. "Early on the business was like riding a roller coaster," said Leuteritz. "We needed stability." In 2009 Patriot Foundry & Castings participated in Lean training, Value Stream Mapping and Kaizen events with the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NH MEP). This helped them increase productivity while decreasing costs. It enabled them to become more energy efficient and reduced scrap. But it didn't help them get into the ideal customer markets that were right for sustaining their business.

Shortly after the Lean training they worked on some relationship marketing on their own, but it was not sufficient. As Leuteritz put it, "At the time we did not look at a formal process to grow, which markets to get into, and which customers to go after in those markets." They needed to formalize their message but because they were a small company, they had to find a way to be able to market the company while still running the day-to-day business operations.

**Solution:**

Having been involved with NH MEP, Chris received one of their e-blasts in early 2016 about a free hour-long information session titled 5 Steps to Sustain Business Growth. It was designed specifically for small and medium-sized manufacturers. The information session teaches a proven 5-step marketing strategy to help manufacturers accelerate and sustain business growth with cost-effective approaches for customer retention and expansion.

Chris attended the information session and liked what he learned. From there they signed up for an in-depth series of business growth and strategic marketing workshops called the Business Growth Collaborative Program put on by NH MEP. Patriot Foundry & Castings started the Business Growth Collaborative Program with 5 other companies in June of 2016.

Chris found the workshops interesting and informative and the materials easy to understand and use. He also liked the business knowledge and expertise of the instructor who taught them business growth and marketing strategies, tactics and methods that related directly to their business.

The program gave them the ability to find the markets to target and how to obtain customers in those markets. They learned how to set smart goals, hone their elevator pitch, create and send out e-Surveys, analyze website metrics, learn the importance of search engine optimization (SEO), create and send out e-Newsletters, develop sales forecasts, create sales and marketing action plans and more.

But the most important aspect to the Business Growth Collaborative Program was the collaboration. "Building relationships with the other companies in the program was key," Leuteritz said. "We were able to bounce ideas off each other and help each other solve business problems. This led to long lasting relationships between our companies even after the completion of the program."

**Results:**

"The NH MEP Business Growth Collaborative Program gave us the tools to work on our business instead of in our business," said Leuteritz. "It pushed us out of our comfort zone to think of ways to increase profitability and help customers make their products better."

Chris and Debbi have also learned that when their employees feel empowered to contribute, they become energized and look for ways to help the company and their customers. That is why the company culture has changed from reactive to proactive. "Pay alone is not a motivator. So we came up with incentive programs to engage our employees. And we now also offer healthcare which is a big factor in retaining employees." said Leuteritz.

Profits are up and the company is expanding. Later in 2017 they plan to purchase new equipment and move into a larger space with closer access to labor markets. Once that is accomplished, they will be hiring more employees.

"Chris and Debbi have come a long way. With minimal budget they started their journey with a struggling business. They have shown persistence and patience as they went through the building of a solid company set for continuous growth as it is today. It has always been a pleasure working with Chris, Debbi and their team." said Zenagui Brahim, president of NH Manufacturing Extension Partnership.

The following results for Patriot Foundry & Castings can be credited to having gone through the NH MEP Business Growth Collaborative Program:

- On track to increase sales from \$1,700,000 in 2016 to \$2,100,000 in 2017
- Retained all customers and orders from 2016 into 2017
- Added 2 new fulltime employees in 2016 and looking to hire 2 more in 2017
- Increased investment in workforce practices or employee skills at the cost of \$10,000 in 2017
- Evaluating investment in new products or processes at the cost up to \$100,000 in 2017/18
- Evaluating investment in plant or equipment at a cost up to \$500,000 in 2017/18
- Increased investment in new information systems or software at the cost of \$10,000 in 2017
- Evaluating investment options in a new facility at the cost up to \$1,200,000 in 2018

**Testimonial:**

“Working with the NH MEP and the 2016 Growth Collaborative enabled Patriot to focus its marketing efforts and resources in areas where we are strong. It enabled Patriot to focus on the areas where Patriot is profitable and excels. Additionally, we learned new tools to better evaluate where we are as a company and where we are going.”

- Chris Leuteritz, Owner/Manager of Patriot Foundry & Castings - [www.patriotfoundry.com](http://www.patriotfoundry.com)