

## **The Rubber Group Continues to Ensure Customer Satisfaction by Upgrading to ISO 9001:2015**

### **Company Background:**

The year was 1986 when George and Chuck Humphreys started The Rubber Group in Belleville, New Jersey as a distributor of molded rubber products. Then in 1991 the owners decided to move the company and its 5 employees to a less densely populated state, one where they felt had a better quality of life. They moved The Rubber Group into a 3,000 square foot facility in Somersworth, New Hampshire.

During that time some customers were having difficulty placing business with The Rubber Group. They needed certain products The Rubber Group as a distributor did not carry. But losing business was not an option for The Rubber Group. So seizing on an opportunity to keep those customers, they became a manufacturer of custom molded rubber products in 1994. That allowed them to retain business they otherwise would have lost while strengthening customer satisfaction.

Since then The Rubber Group has located to a 30,000 square foot facility in Rochester, New Hampshire where it employs 65 workers. The major markets they serve include industrial, oil and gas, transportation, aerospace, and medical.

Innovation, quality products and a high level of customer service is what makes The Rubber Group stand out from their competition.

### **Situation:**

The Rubber Group had been ISO 9001 certified since 1996. Then in 2015 they lost their Quality Manager. "He left 2 weeks before an ISO audit," said Rob Pruyn, President and Operation Manager of The Rubber Group. "So we promoted Mike Stuart one of our techs to Quality Manager to handle the audit."

"Mike had a lot on his plate at the time," said Pruyn. "Luckily we had a mature ISO system in place and Mike was able to get through the audit just fine." But there was more work for him to do. "Around the same time as the audit we realized we had to upgrade our ISO certification from ISO 9001:2008 to ISO 9001:2015," said Pruyn. "We knew we couldn't handle the upgrade ourselves and needed to look for outside help for Mike so he could supervise the upgrade."

### **Solution:**

Rob began looking around for ISO 9001:2015 upgrade training. He had used New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NH MEP) for Lean training and Plant Layout to solve problems for them in the past. "We looked into what NH MEP had to offer and decided to go with their ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Collaborative Program." said Pruyn.

The NH MEP ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Collaborative Program allows small to medium size companies undertake the ISO certification process. NH MEP with the support of its partner Exolytics created a program designed to develop and train SME's on the ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade at an affordable cost.

In 2016 Mike Stuart, Quality Manager and Lynn Linville, Sales and Customer Service attended the ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Collaborative Program. Stuart felt the ISO training was so effective was because it was held with a small group of companies. "Being a collaborative it was beneficial to work alongside other companies," said Stuart. "We could bounce ideas off each other, discuss different strategies, go over what we learned together in class and what we did on-site."

After completing the NH MEP ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Collaborative Program, The Rubber Group was awarded ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Certification in April of 2017.

Pruyn had this to say about the importance of being certified for the ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade, "ISO is a part of us. It's embedded in our organization and helps us focus on customer satisfaction." Stuart added, "As long as you keep up with ISO and continue with it, it works very well."

### **Results:**

The Rubber Group knows that maintaining ISO certification is needed to keep their business growing. It does this by helping to ensure customer satisfaction. "Getting the ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade certification shows our customers we're on top of our organization," said Pruyn. "That we're prepared and constantly looking toward the future."

The following results for The Rubber Group can be credited by having gone through the NH MEP ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Collaborative Program:

- \$600,000 in new sales in 2017
- Retained sales of \$6,000,000 in 2017 that otherwise would have been lost
- Added 5 new fulltime employees in the last 12 months
- Increased investment in workforce practices or employee skills at the cost of \$15,000 in 2017
- Increased investment in new products or processes at the cost of \$14,000 in 2017
- Increased investment in plant or equipment at the cost of \$350,000 in 2017
- Increased investment in new information systems or software at the cost of \$30,000 in 2017
- \$150,000 cost savings in labor, materials, energy, overhead, or other areas that would otherwise been spent in 2017

### **Testimonial:**

"I would highly recommend using the team at NHMEP. They consistently deliver a wide range of important services at very reasonable costs. We've used them for lean training, energy conservation consultancy, focused improvement activities and of course the ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Collaborative Program. The results are continued revenue and job growth couple with improved financial performance."

*Rob Pruyn, President and Operations Manager, The Rubber Group*