

frontline



Joe Kwiatkowski has built a successful business based on his mastery of the science – and the art – of creating super-strong bonds.

skills, synergy generate company's success

First, there are the high-tech precision welds he provides for customers who employ his capabilities to join pieces and parts critical to their operations. Then there are the longstanding bonds of friendship and respect with fellow Mound scientists-turned-entrepreneurs – people like himself who have commercialized the advanced technologies they developed during the Cold War.

Great synergy at Mound

"We still have a close family of people with complementary technologies. We trust each other and use each other's capabilities. There is great synergy here," he said.

Kwiatkowski's company, Precision Joining Technologies, was borne of his 17 years of DOE experience in welding-related research, development and production of components for nuclear weapons applications. "At Mound, we lived in a sheltered, sophisticated, high research nuclear weapons world that was rich with knowledge," he said. "In that world, every weld had to be perfect."

(Please see "Skills, Synergy" on page 2)

what's inside:

MMCIC makes "right" connections

page 2

Board member brings world-class experience

page 3

Cleaned up and ready to use

page 3

\$30m approved to finalize cleanup

page 4



Precision Joining Technologies President Joe Kwiatkowski displays one of the numerous welding systems in his company's lab.



(“Skills, Synergy” continued from page 1.)

Customers are amazed

The 1993 announcement of Mound’s closure prompted Kwiatkowski to begin planning the commercialization of his capabilities. He launched Precision Joining Technologies in 1996, and quickly gained a steady business repairing metal molds for the plastic injection mold industry, which has a strong presence in the Dayton region.

Kwiatkowski was the first in the country to repair molds using laser welding, which is ultra-precise and strong. It generates far less heat than conventional welding processes, so molds can be repaired with less distortion.

“We had been doing laser welding for 25 years at Mound before I began doing it commercially,” he said, noting that the company’s four laser welding systems represent the company’s specialty and are the most in demand. “My customers are always amazed by the quality we can provide.”

A longstanding customer, the Broadway


Company, a Dayton-based producer of plastic injection molds, has used Precision Joining Technologies as a provider of laser welding since 1996. “No one does the caliber of work Precision Joining Technologies does,” said project manager Gary Moore. “Whenever we have a rush project, they turn it around overnight.”

Specializing in precision

With its well-developed capabilities in micro-welding – the lab contains 30 microscopes – it is not surprising that the company’s main customers are makers of products that demand precision, such as medical devices and detonators for weapons systems. There is also a niche market that utilizes the company’s capability to weld components containing energetic materials, a rare offering among laser welding companies.

Finally, Kwiatkowski and his staff of five also conduct research and development for unique applications generated by a variety of universities and other research centers throughout the country.

MMCIC provides unique benefits

Although he’s trained as an engineer, the president of Precision Joining Technologies clearly has a head for business. He has taken advantage of the excellent opportunities provided by MMCIC, including the purchase of equipment,  of lab space, public relations and marketing assistance. He also appreciates the availability of industrial utilities, such as compressed air, 440 three-phase electric and chilled water, all difficult to find at other industrial parks.

“MMCIC’s business assistance and the utilities to support our work have been great benefits,” he said. “It would be very expensive to absorb these costs myself. Plus, I like the fact that Mound is a one-stop shop. The Mound technologists possess unique talents and capabilities not available elsewhere. When we worked together on the nuclear weapons programs, I always said we could accomplish just about anything. That still holds true today.”


MMCIC makes “right” connections



Committed to tapping local talent and resources to help reach its goals, MMCIC

has discovered great opportunities for collaboration with Wright State University, especially in the areas of strategic planning and marketing.

- Management professor Dr. Scott Williams of the Raj Sooin College of Business was contracted to conduct a market opportunity analysis for T Building, a subterranean structure of 104,000 square feet designed to survive catastrophic forces that would destroy conventional buildings. The goal of Williams’ study was to determine the industries and organizations most likely to be able to maximize the building’s unique characteristics. The study is currently underway.

- In another project with Williams, the 19 students of his Senior Strategy class analyzed Mound Manufacturing Center’s strategic plan. They focused on six areas: customer analysis, market analysis, core competencies, the management team, the value proposition  and promotions, and personnel planning.

“Some of the suggestions involved  emerging markets and how we can position ourselves for some of that work,” said MMC President Al Hodapp. “It was insightful and I have used some of the suggestions already to help increase  customer satisfaction, which resulted in an increase in sales.”

- In another senior-level class, this one under the direction of Dr. Chuck Gulas, professor of marketing, students undertook the development of marketing plans for the Mound Museum Association.

Even though most of the students were from the Dayton area, few knew the history of Mound, and “it turned out to be a history lesson for them,” according to Gulas. Interestingly, the students determined that the museum’s main challenge is fundraising rather than driving traffic.

MMA officers were impressed with the students’ presentations. “These plans contain some very useful ideas, and much valuable information identifying potential clients and supporters,” said MMA President Frank Lonadier. “We will assign a group or several groups to study these plans in early 2006.”

“We will pursue opportunities such as these to involve community resources in the effort to redevelop Mound,” said MMCIC Marketing Director Bert Kollaard. “This allows faculty and students to gain valuable experience, and it gives us the benefit of their talents and hard work.”



board member brings world-class experience



Technical expertise and business savvy have made Dr. Jim VanTassel invaluable as an MMCIC board member.

When MMCIC officials recruited Dr. Jim VanTassel to serve on the first board of directors 12 years ago, they were looking for someone with technical knowledge to help them make decisions about advanced technologies and environmental issues. When he agreed to serve, they got their technical expert – and a pleasant surprise.

Vision and leadership

With a doctorate in chemistry and a career spent driving successful units within high-powered corporations, the board member has brought a wealth of technical knowledge, business savvy and marketing know-how to the volunteer board position. Those qualities, coupled with his knack for discerning issues, have made VanTassel, 76, invaluable as a decision maker and policy setter. As board vice chairman, he has helped lead the organization to its status as a national model for DOE defense conversions.

“The extraordinary quality of Jim’s education and professional experience speaks for itself: It’s world class,” said Don Koller, who has also served on the board since its inception. “Clearly, his vision and leadership

have contributed significantly to the success of our mission.”

Customers’ perspective

VanTassel’s experience with corporations such as Texas Instruments and NCR have given him insights that he has applied to the challenges of transforming Mound into a successful business enterprise. And while he acknowledges that the early issues – the pace of environmental cleanup, small-business incubation, equipment sales, indemnification and countless others – were monumental, the biggest challenge still remains: filling the space at Mound.

“In my experience, I faced a lot of customers, and that has given me the customer’s perspective,” said the former vice president of NCR’s Microelectronics Division. “From that perspective, I can see that we need to continue making improvements to the site’s appearance. We’re constantly working on that.”

VanTassel also believes that MMCIC should continue to support existing tenants who are at the forefront of the technology growth areas represented by state- and university-sponsored research initiatives.

“These tenants generate a climate that will attract funding and additional tenants,” he observed.

Gratifying experience

Although he never envisioned his board tenure lasting for nearly 12 years, VanTassel has gained personal satisfaction through his service. He is especially pleased with the development he has witnessed in MMCIC’s top leadership.

“I have watched (MMCIC president) Mike Grauwelman grow into a mature executive with a strategic outlook, and that has been most gratifying,” he said.

A native of Wisconsin, VanTassel and his wife of 44 years, Mary Lou, have two grown sons. The couple lives in Oakwood.

cleaned up and ready to use

Three new parcels of land representing 52 acres are soon to be transferred from DOE to MMCIC. The transfer also includes three cleaned-up buildings that provide 54,000 square feet of office and manufacturing space. A portion of the space has already been leased.

With the new parcels, MMCIC will take ownership of a total of 179 acres, or 58 percent of the 300-acre site.

“This will open up ground for future development and building space to lease,” said MMCIC Operations Director Frank Bullock. “These are the last parcels we will receive before the final transfer later this year.”



Building 102, with prominent Mound Road frontage, is included in the latest property transfer from DOE to MMCIC. All facilities and land have been cleaned up and are ready for reuse.





P.O. Box 232
 Miamisburg, OH 45343-0232
 Phone: 937-865-4462
 Web Site: www.mound.com

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\$30m approved to finalize cleanup

Good news for Mound's redevelopment came out of Washington recently when Congress passed legislation appropriating \$30 million for environmental cleanup of the four-acre portion of the Mound site known as Operable Unit-1. There previously had been uncertainty about whether DOE would complete cleanup of the area.

"We are grateful to our Congressional delegation, especially Congressman Mike Turner, who became the champion for this cause," said Miamisburg Mayor Dick Church. "Thanks to his efforts, DOE will now be positioned to fulfill its obligation to this community and finish the environmental cleanup work begun more than a decade ago."

Also contributing to the success of this effort was Congressman David Hobson, chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on

Energy and Water, who sponsored the legislation, and Senator Mike DeWine, who advocated in favor of the appropriation with the Senate's Energy and Water Committee.

"The assistance of our Congressional delegation in this matter was outstanding," said MMCIC Vice Chairman Don Koller.



The \$30 million appropriation will allow DOE to complete Mound's cleanup and transfer to MMCIC for reuse as a scientific business and technology park.

