



SSP FITTINGS SAYS ITS STATUS AS A PRIVATELY OWNED AMERICAN MANUFACTURER IS KEY TO ITS SUCCESS.

MADE IN THE U.S.A.

SSP IS 'AN AMERICAN MANUFACTURING SUCCESS STORY,' AND WANTS TO STAY THAT WAY. **BY CHRIS PETERSEN**

Just by virtue of being one of the top-five manufacturers of instrumentation fittings and valves in the world, SSP stands out in the industry. However, the company has another quality that makes it even more exceptional and it is adamant about holding onto that quality.

"We're the only 100 percent made-in-the-United States player in this industry," Director of Marketing Reed Stith says. "We're committed to being an American manufacturing

success story. That's at the core of who we are."

Director of Manufacturing Paul Omilion says the company's desire to remain a completely American operation is one of its strengths, but it's far from the only reason why SSP has achieved the position it has in the marketplace today.

He also credits the company's privately held status, its relatively nimble size and its adherence to lean manufacturing principles as other

components that make up the story of its success.

Based in Ohio, SSP manufactures stainless steel and nickel-based alloy fluid system components, including fittings, valves, fabricated assemblies and fabricated assemblies. The company's primary customers are in the oil and gas industry, but Omilion says the company serves clients in sectors as diverse as chemical, CNG and LNG vehicles, power generation, chemical, alternative fuel and aerospace. The company was founded in 1926 as a screw machine products manufacturer, but shifted focus to fluid system components during World War II.

SINGLE-SITE OPERATION

Omilion says the company's facility in Twinsburg, Ohio, is vertically integrated, making SSP a single-site operation. Along with full tool and die capabilities, the company has a forge operation that forges components on site. Because of this, he says, the company is able to make changes and modifications to its products quickly and easily where its larger competitors would be stymied by a slower reaction time.

That plays into the company's overall strategy well, as Stith says SSP leverages its extensive experience and nimble operations into an ability to serve customers who might be ignored by larger competitors. "We're just as interested in helping out a mid-sized customer as a large customer," he says, adding that the company's efficient operations and network of distributors make it possible to provide detailed services where larger competitors would not. "We feel we are uniquely focused on the installer and the end-user who actually uses our product.

"Some companies will differentiate themselves based on new product designs," Stith continues. "That's not what we're doing - we're doing it more on service and a better under-

standing of the installer's job."

SSP's belief in forging strong relationships also applies to how it works with its distributors, Stith says. "We treat them as long-term partners, like a marriage," he explains. "We are committed to being our distributors' favorite supplier."

WORKING LEANER

One of the company's primary concerns is making sure it is able to manage its growth without becoming bloated and inefficient. "We're growing at a decent pace, and we're investing to keep up with the demand," Omilion says.

One of the tools SSP has adopted to help it keep pace with its growth is lean, which has been a part of the company's strategy for about eight years. Stith says SSP has staged

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kaizen events, hired consultants and established its own internal continuous improvement office. This office consists of three full-time employees whose job it is to drive continuous improvement efforts at all levels of the company.

The company also has taken steps to ensure it retains its most skilled and valuable employees. To help them stay healthy and reduce health-care costs, SSP is proactive with well-

ness initiatives, including an in-house fitness center and clinic staffed by medical professionals. Efforts such as these have allowed the company to hold onto the people it needs the most. "We have very little turnover," Stith says. "That's not an issue."

STANDING FIRM

As the company continues to secure its place as one of the premier manufacturers in its industry, SSP believes growing its business overseas will be one key to growth in the future. However, along with the company's focus on the customer, Omilion says an increase in overseas business won't have any impact on where it bases its operations.

"Our commitment is to keep all the manufacturing in the United States," Omilion says. **mt**



SSP STAINLESS STEEL PRODUCTS

