

# Business

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## Company Spotlight: Fusion Tech, Fusion who?

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If you have not yet heard of them, you are about to. What started as a few machines in a garage shop, is now an adaptable, manufacturing operation housed in five large buildings. Fusion TECH is located among the cornfields southwest of Roseville. They employ about 60 people and they are expanding.

Just in 2010, Fusion TECH added another 28,000-square-foot production facility. Dan Bentz, general manager of Fusion TECH, says, "Yes, we are finally starting to show up on the radar. We started out small, and fortunately we are beginning to go through those growing pains that many companies experience. We have expanded our capability - this has increased our customer base, and now we are adding buildings." Now with a research and development building for developing prototype products, Fusion TECH is finding ways to enter new markets.

"We are about to unveil a new company called Stainless Reflections, which crafts monuments and memorials from stainless steel. We are very excited about entering this industry."

Fusion TECH produces installations for food industries, water treatment facilities and the bio-fuel industry.

"We cater to restaurants, hospitals, large and small manufacturers, and even the individual consumer. You don't have to look too far to see some of our smaller-scale projects. We created stainless steel signs and produced kitchen installations for



Fusion Tech is located just north of Good Hope off 20th Avenue. For the past 15 years, they have grown at an exponential rate.

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several Macomb-area businesses." Dan adds, "We are pretty flexible. If there is demand for a product, we can find a way to produce it." While Fusion TECH specializes in stainless steel fabrication, they make products out of just about any material.

"We specialize in stainless steel, but we engineer designs with other materials, such as plastic, aluminum and carbon steel. Our CNC machining, laser cutting and waterjet cutting processes offer a high degree of flexibility in the types of products we make and the material we can process." Fusion TECH's capability is expanded with bead blasting, roll forming, MIG/TIG/ ARC welding, and they are ASME U/UM/R pressure-vessel certified.

So how has Fusion TECH weathered the recession? Well, through a blend of knowledge, innovation, and speed. Dan explains, "Having a deep understanding of materials has really helped our business. Sometimes a customer calls for a specification of a certain material and we can offer

them a cost-savings solution with an alternative material that will do what they want even better." Fusion TECH also takes advantage of software technology for modeling solutions. "When a customer needs an engineering solution, we will create 3D computer-generated model so they have a much better visual. Visualizations can answer questions they might have and reveal other challenges that were not immediately seen." What really distinguishes Fusion TECH from other companies is their ability to respond to their customers.

"We are a quick-turn company. Sometimes we get a customer that needs an engineering solution right away, or because they don't have the engineering resources immediately available. We do engineering every day - it's our business."

Not only are they adaptable, Fusion TECH finds ways to reduce costs in good upfront design and technology investment. "We consider how a product is made early-on and try to remove extra steps. We always think

about the manufacturing operations in the design stage. For instance, when laser-cutting material, we will also have the machine put in scribe lines [etchings] to eliminate taping-out [measuring] by our fabricators. The scribe lines are generated by our computer design software and don't take any time to make. This cuts down on measuring time and potential errors. Really, the fabricators can spend more time constructing, rather than measuring and marking with tape measures." Dan highlights the importance of equipment and tooling. "We are not afraid to invest in good tooling. Good tooling and newer equipment adds to our capability and looking at the long-term, this helps drive down the cost to our customers."

Growing hasn't come without its challenges. Dan Bentz has transitioned from an engineering role, to sales, and now operations. He explains, "I worked in steel industry for 12 years at company in Kansas City, Mo. After my brother Brandon started Fusion TECH 15 years ago, I came to Illi-

nois to help him grow the business. Today, I am managing resources, corresponding with customers and trying to control our rate of growth. I have hired several engineers in the last few years, because I spend my time managing the current and future operations of our business." Although his job is now strategic, he welcomes the challenges a growth role brings.

If you ask Dan what is important to him, he will tell you partnerships with community, area companies and Western Illinois University.

"Partnering with area companies helps keep jobs in Illinois. We want area companies to know that they may not have to seek suppliers two or three states over."

In the last two years, Fusion TECH has hired several graduates from WIU and they regularly hire student interns from the school's Engineering Technology Department.

"We really want to forge a partnership with the university...education is extremely important to us. Western is a supplier of talent and because we are neighbors, we can help each other." And despite his busy schedule, Dan shows his commitment as an active member of the Engineering Technology Advisor Board at Western Illinois University.

Fusion TECH is a company that has achieved robustness through diversity.

They engineer solutions for any business, and their leaders believe in giving back to the community. For more information about Fusion TECH, visit <http://www.ftiinc.org/> or call them at (309) 774-4130.