

Blasch Precision Ceramics Skills up Staff with BGS Support



Background

Blasch Precision Ceramics is a manufacturer of net shape ceramic products and refractory components for chemical processing, mining, heavy industrial processing, power generation and other applications. Its high-performing materials are used for the containment, control and refinement of molten metal. The 42-year-old company employs about 125 in Menands, New York.

The Situation

Very little of what Blasch manufacturers is standard product. With such a heavy emphasis on custom-made, highly technical products, Blasch President and CEO Jack Parrish says technical skills alone cannot drive business development; the manufacturer's sales team needs to be able to effectively communicate with customers and understand their processes, so that the company can evaluate opportunities that can be improved with Blasch's unique material and design advantages. This level of communication and analysis enhances the manufacturer's ability to create a value proposition for the customer, and increase sales. Many of those sales are also to customers overseas, making it vital for sales representatives to be up to date on export regulations and best practices. Exports directly account for 25 percent of Blasch's direct sales and indirectly for more than half.

The Solution

Blasch and the Center for Economic Growth's Business Growth Solutions unit (BGS) have a working relationship that spans about three decades. Over the last several years, CEG has connected Blasch with a variety of resources, including Sandler Sales Training, Export Controls under the International Traffic in Arms (ITAR) & The Export Administration Regulations (EAR), and End-to-End Quality System One-Day Workshop.

For example, more than 15 Blasch employees have participated in Sandler Sales programs with CEG's assistance. One recent example was when Caitlynn (Coppinger) Rogers, P.E., a Rensselaer Polytechnic



Institute-educated mechanical engineer who joined Blasch as a sales engineer in 2016. While Rogers had significant engineering experience and some customer contact at her previous employer, Parrish wanted to refine her sales skills, so he enlisted her in the Sandler Sales Mastery Training. Parrish noted how technical sales is a unique challenge that demands both formal skill and desire to communicate, and "Sandler has helped us couple the tech with the communication." Since completing the Sandler program in 2017, Rogers has been promoted to Senior Product Engineer, leading business development efforts in the company's Technical Business Development group.

“Whenever we have a unique challenge our first thought is, let's see what [BGS Vice President of Business Development] Louise [Aitcheson] knows about the resources available. The ability for CEG to align resources is invaluable to us because we're not out there the way Louise is out there.

**- Jack Parrish
Blasch President and CEO**

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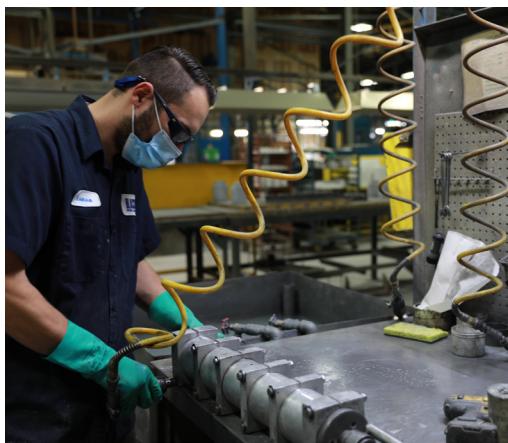
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Also in 2017, Blasch put several employees through an ITAR and EAR Training. This program identifies recent changes to export regulations and the steps manufacturers need to take to comply with them. The program also includes a review of existing regulations and examples of how exports should be properly classified as well as how to obtain requisite licenses and permission. With so much of Blasch's products being inherently exported, Parrish said, "The last thing you want to do is provide a product to a country with ill intent."

More recently, six Blasch employees participated in a Quality System Workshop provided to assist the manufacturer in developing projects to pinpoint specific areas of improvement. In change, Blasch has experienced growth, savings and investment as well as continued success on a global market level that is readily changing.

"It is imperative that we constantly address areas to enhance our business development skills and also reduce costs. For this reason, Blasch and CEG have developed a partnership to steadily enhance Blasch's business in a multifaceted manner.

- Jack Parrish
Blasch President and CEO



To learn how CEG BGS could help your company, contact CEG BGS Senior Vice President, Michael Lobsinger at michaell@ceg.org or call 518-465-8975 x238.