

Control Air of Amherst NH

With Support from MLANS...

Amherst Manufacturer Boasts 120% Productivity and On-Time Shipping

In the highly competitive world manufacturing market, many firms are barely breaking even with an expectation of no more than 80% productivity. However, one local company stands out for its consistent sales growth and 120% productivity. It is even more striking that the company is small and the basic products have been made the same way for 35 years.

Since its founding in 1987, privately held ControlAir of Amherst, New Hampshire, has been creating new precision pneumatic and electro-pneumatic control products applied in a wide range of customer-specific applications, developed through on joint development projects and strategic design partnerships.

On Time Shipments Boost Customer Service

CFO Bob Peterson [now retired] cites the company's "on-time" manufacturing model as a crucial factor in its success, as well as the investment in computer technology and IT management that makes "on-time" manufacturing possible. "What's the distinction between us and other manufacturers? We ship on time. Our vendors ship to us on time. Our shop floor manufactures products on time. Our customer policy is that we tell them a day, and they get that day, we tell them two weeks, they get two weeks," Bob explains.

"We have an investment in inventory, a big buffer that allows us to do make these commitments. We're something like Dell – we stock to the assembly level – so when the customer calls and wants a specific assembly, we build it from the existing sub-assemblies," he says.



Bob Peterson

Technology Investment Pays Dividends

To fulfill its "on time" mission, the company relies on a material requirements plan, produced by its software every morning to be ready when the employees arrive for work. "We can't do anything on our production floor, we can't even ship an order without the material requirements plan – so we've gone all out working with technology for our business and it has paid significant dividends. That makes Mark Aronson an important player" Bob says, adding, "We buy a lot of components from overseas requiring long lead times and our computers have to watch that."

Peace of Mind – At Last

Before engaging MLANS to take care of the computers, Bob says, "I used to dream about IT – nightmares! It was hard work for me. We didn't have the comfort that if the material requirements plan goes down, there will be the response team to bring it back up. The uptime was only 80% to 90%." To further compound the problem, there was significant downtime when a major Microsoft update failed. Bob tried several different IT consulting firms before MLANS, but concluded, "They were not technically up-to-date."

When MLANS took over the IT management for ControlAir, the first steps were to fix the failed Microsoft update and to install a new firewall for better efficiency. Since then, Mark Aronson installed a new server and balanced the load between the servers, for better performance.

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ControlAir Improvements Add Up to Peace of Mind

Since hiring MLANS, Bob says, “Our customer service has improved, our on-time delivery has improved, up-time on the computer has improved to 99.9%, and most of all I have peace of mind. I don’t have to worry about IT anymore.”

Employees Happier and More Productive

Bob Peterson intends to keep the systems current and prevent down-time to support the company’s 120% productivity. He says, “Before Mark, we had disgruntled employees over the IT situation. Since we started with Mark Aronson, morale is much better in the user community. They look at Mark as a solution rather than a technical guy coming in and trying to fix it. They know when Mark comes in they’re going to be a lot better off, even though there hasn’t been a whole lot of that since Mark took care of the issues in the beginning. We know he wants to help us and we’re not just another stop on the list of customers.’

“By having the right equipment for our employees, they’re able to be more efficient and they’re motivated. Who wants to go to work with a broken computer? Who wants to work with a piece of junk on your desk? Who wants to come to work and find out in the middle of the day that your server’s down? Uptime is very important.”

A Businessman and an Inside Resource

Bob trusts Mark Aronson, “I look at Mark Aronson as an inside resource. He has become part of our team. I trust him so much that I’ve given him the keys to the shop so he can come and go when he wants.’

“Mark is a competent person. He designed our system, put it in place, guess what – it works. That’s what people want. They want to hear basic information. We like the person, the character, we like what he does, he’s a learned individual, he’s experienced, he’s educated, he’s got the school of hard knocks behind him, and he wants to give us the best possible peace of mind.’

“I’m no longer involved in IT, short of having cordial discussions with Mark. Mark is not the kind of guy with an ego that tries to tell you all about the technical stuff when he’s really telling you how smart he is. Smart isn’t just the IT side – smart is being a businessman who can understand how business people help each other. Mark will not spend my money just because it’s a good technical thing to do. He’ll only spend my money if it is a good business decision to be made.’

“Mark understands that we’re people and that’s a breath of fresh air. We want to surround ourselves with supportive people to advocate for us and that’s what Mark does.

A Proactive, Preventative Approach

Bob says, “This is a proactive, preventative approach. With Peace of Mind, Mark knows your computer is broken, and fixes it, even before you know it was broken. His Blackberry tells him immediately. When you call him, he’s already on the job. I know we’ll never be in a catastrophic situation AND we have 24/7 support. That’s unheard of in this industry. It’s a new paradigm to be able to support remotely as if you were an employee.”

Working with MLANS has made Bob Peterson’s job easier. He says, “I used to have to coordinate three IT vendors. Now Mark Aronson owns it. This is a 100% solution to IT. ”