

Shining a light on innovative Utah companies

Awards » Mity-Lite, Int'mtn Electronics named Utah manufacturers of the year

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A year ago the management of Orem-based Mity-Lite Inc. was resigned to the idea they soon would have to arrange for the company's new "Mesh - One Folding Chair" to be manufactured offshore.

One of the company's internal manufacturing teams, though, had a different idea.

"They approached me and argued the continuous effort by our employees to improve the efficiency of our plant had reached the point where the chair could be made here for less than it could be produced offshore," said Randy Hales, Mity-Lite's chief executive.

To drive home their point, the manufacturing team asked that they be allowed to submit their own bid for the contract and compete head to head with any offshore companies interested in manufacturing the folding chair, Hales said.

"It turned out they were right," Hales said. "Our team submitted the low bid."

Mity-Lite's success in improving the efficiency of its production processes led to it this week being named the 2009 Manufacturer of the Year among companies with more than 100 employees by the Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Utah. Also named: Intermountain Electronics of Price.

The partnership is a nonprofit collaborative effort between the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development and the private sector. Its goal is to help manufacturers improve their performance and increase their growth and profitability so they can compete with offshore suppliers.

"It isn't a prerequisite that an award recipient have had dealings with us, but in this case a number of Mity-Lite's employees received our training in lean manufacturing techniques that helped them identify areas where waste could be cut and efficiencies achieved," said Paul Olsen, an MEP spokesman.

Mity-Lite currently employs 250 people and generates revenue of approximately \$60 million a year.

Another Utah manufacturer, Intermountain Electronics in Price, also was named the 2009 Manufacturer of the Year in the category of companies with fewer than 100 employees.

Intermountain Electronics, which claims approximately 95 employees, manufactures and services electrical control systems that are widely used in the coal and minerals mining and oil and natural-gas industries.

"We've been extremely fortunate during this recession," said Nate White, vice president of manufacturing. "Even though the coal mining industry was weak due to lower demand for energy, the gold mining industry for example was taking off."

White said the firm also implements lean manufacturing protocols, which included a supply-chain management process that allowed the company to have better control over its inventory.

"It's nice to be recognized from the improvements that we've achieved," he said.

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