

**GS: When was the company founded?**

**MR:** Dave Patterson and I started Custom Gear & Machine in 1994. We had worked together previously at Patterson Gear—which he owned, and where I was the vice president of finance—until 1989, when he sold the company. We both did consulting work for a number of years, but we'd always kept in touch. Then we got together just before Christmas in 1993 to talk about starting a new company, with Dave as the president and me as vice president. My background is in accounting, so I handle all the business aspects and things like our ISO and lean-manufacturing training programs, and Dave is in charge of everything having to do with pricing and customer service, such as providing quotes to our customers and things of that nature.

**GS: How has the company grown since that time?**


**MR:** We started in one building, which Dave owned, and we're still in that same building plus another one, which gives us 20,000 square feet of manufacturing space. Our plan is to move into a new facility by the end of this year, or in early 2008, and we'll be looking for something with at least twice the space that we have now—probably around 50,000 square feet. We currently employ 54 people, and we'll also be looking to add another 15 or 20 employees. The company has grown steadily over the years, and we actually did \$11 million in sales last year, so we're looking to continue that trend by expanding our facilities, our workforce, and by investing in some new equipment as well.

**GS: What are your capabilities, and what industries do you serve?**

**MR:** We offer CNC turning, milling, and gear-cutting services, as well as inspection, but our emphasis is really on gear grinding, so our main pieces of equip-

ment in that area are a Höfler 700 and a model 400. That allows us to offer gears from a two-inch OD all the way up to 30 inches. As for our customer base, we're currently focusing on the North American market, with clients from as far as Texas to Minnesota and along the East Coast. The industries we're involved in are agriculture—manufacturing gears that go into combines and tractors, for instance—construction, mining, forestry, heavy machinery, engine components, and off-road vehicles. We do a lot of prototyping for our customers, but we work straight from their designs, and we make a lot of repair parts in addition to offering stocking programs that are tailored to our customer's needs. We specialize in open gearing—spur and helical gears—and splined shafts, and the orders we ship are from one to 500 manufacturer-lot sizes.

**GS: You mentioned that you're in charge of ISO and lean-manufacturing training programs. What's going on there?**

**MR:** We're registered under the ISO 9001:2000 program, but then we decided to take that one step farther by working toward Six Sigma, which we're just getting started on. We now have all of our upper management involved in attending training courses that are offered through Northern Illinois University, and we feel that it's really going to help us achieve our goals. Like a lot of companies, we're trying to trim expenses wherever we can, and the reason that we're doing that is so we can pass the savings along to our customers so that they don't have to shop overseas. Even though our customers are mostly found here in the States, we're competing against manufacturers found worldwide, so we have to be competitive from a global standpoint. In addition to offering competitive pricing, we're committed to offering our customers the highest quality products and the best customer service to be found. 



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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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