

GS: Tell us about your background in gear manufacturing.

KS: My father was a tool and die maker, so he had me in the machine shop at a young age. I graduated from Tennessee Tech University in 1991 with a degree in industrial technology and took a job in fabrication with the Lozier Corp. The Browning division of Emerson Power Transmission presented my first opportunity to be involved with heat treating and open gearing. A couple of years with EPT led to a position with Clark-Hurth Components as a manufacturing engineer over parallel axis gearing, and engineering manager after the company's acquisition by the Dana Corporation. Outsourcing efforts and downsizing of their manufacturing operations is what led me toward making the decision to launch Abundant Manufacturing in 2004. With 14 years of experience in gear cutting, I sold everything—including my house—to see if I could make a go of it.

GS: For such a young company, your growth has been pretty impressive.


KS: It took quite a bit of work to get it off the ground, though. For the first six months it was just me and a retired shaper pro named Isaac Pettis. I spent all of my time beating the bushes to try and get those first contracts in place while Isaac worked endless hours on that first 36-6 shaper to ensure that the product shipped as promised. We didn't have any income at all during that time, but slowly that changed. During our first year of operation we had \$113,000 in revenue, but we managed to raise that to \$4 million in the second year. Last year we were at \$11 million, and we're projecting \$15 million for this year. The off-highway market has played a major role in that growth, with mining and construction being so strong, but our goal in the coming years is to diversify our sales into other markets so that we'll be in a better position to weather the ups and downs of the economy.

GS: Which markets do you plan to target?

KS: Marine and power generation, and we're hoping for an opportunity to break into the

aerospace market as well. We have the ability to cut from one up to 100 inches, but 20 to 48 inches is where we excel. We're expanding our facilities in order to meet the projected growth in those areas. Right now we have 160,000 square feet in one location, another 55,000 at a nearby site that includes our induction heat-treating operation, and we're building a new 45,000 square-foot facility with high bays for larger products. This will bring us to approximately 260,000 square feet in all. In terms of our equipment, we have hobbers and shapers—at 10, 20, 36, and 48 inches—as well as a CNC shaper with workholding tailored for thin-walled section planet rings. In addition, we currently provide analytical gear inspections up to 40 inches. But the new building project, as well as the machines we'll be bringing online, will expand our capacity and capabilities significantly within the next year.

GS: Where are your customers found?

KS: In the United States we have accounts in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, North and South Carolina, Mississippi, Virginia, and I can't leave out Tennessee. We're also shipping to Europe at distribution points in Belgium, Hungary, and Italy. We now have 41 employees—with more employment opportunities in the coming months to support our customer base—and we're operating two 12-hour shifts every day of the week, with four crews. The most important thing is that we grow in a way that doesn't compromise quality. Right now we're in the final stages of obtaining our ISO certification, and we'll continue to pursue whatever certification is required to satisfy our customer's high demands. We're a young company, and extremely aggressive, but we're not going to sacrifice the reputation we're working so hard to build by cutting corners. Long before we go out there and ask people for their business, we're going to make sure that we can handle it—that the infrastructure required to meet their needs is in place. And we're well on the way to making that a reality. 



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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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