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Custom Marine diversifies beyond boats

Meghan Diemel, For Post-Crescent Media Published 1:28 p.m. CT Oct. 27, 2014 | Updated 12:53 p.m. CT Dec. 4, 2014



(Photo: Post-Crescent Media file photo)

NEENAH – Hundreds of miles from the ocean, Custom Marine Inc. has its roots in the Fox Valley, where in 1984 it was founded to provide offshore boat racers with high-quality headers, tailpipes and exhaust systems.

That had to change after the market crash in 2007, said sales manager Chris Morth. The Neenah company diversified by adding another sector — CMI Industrial.

"We're still doing fabrication and exhaust components in the marine industry; however, we have diversified into different industries," Morth says.

Jim Perri, industrial sales manager with CMI, said though they've stepped into different industrial-based markets, they're still using the same people, equipment and processes that have always existed at CMI.

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"We are now working a lot with the 'power generation' industry, so these can be any type of generator, or gen sets as they're known, from the very small to very, very large," Perri said. "We're providing exhaust tubing, either in a stainless or aluminized steel material, depending on the customer needs."

The company, which experienced double-digit growth in 2014 and expects similar growth in 2015, is hiring CNC machinists, TIG welders, fabricators and CNC bending operators.

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"Ultimately we're looking for the people who are interested and intrigued by the products so that they have that commitment to quality and have the skillset to build quality products," says Morth. "There are a lot of people who can weld in this world, but only a certain percentage of them can weld here, to the quality level we need."

CMI has partnered strongly with Fox Valley Technical College to the degree that many of the instructors at FVTC are former employees of Custom Marine, Morth says.

"We work closely with them so they know what we're looking for," he says. "If they see somebody with a stronger skillset closer to what we need, they'll send them through."

"The thing that has made us successful is that we have history of building high-quality parts. We focus on having good quality, good delivery and good service ... the customer is going to spend a little more, but they know they're going to get quality."

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