

Precision Express Manufacturing Achieves ISO 9001 Certification with Assistance from Bristol Grant Program and CONNSTEP

Background

Precision Express Manufacturing (PEM) is a CNC Swiss manufacturer located in Bristol, Connecticut. Family-owned by Bena Agastra and her husband Al Bebri, and operated for over a decade, PEM strives to continuously expand and modernize their equipment and facility.

The PEM mission is to provide customers with high quality precision parts and express, on-time delivery. They produce custom components for a variety of industries including aerospace, medical, and automotive following procedures that ensure cost efficiencies for their customers.

Growth Mindset

Retaining customers and growing sales are often top of mind for any business owner. Agastra and Bebri of PEM are no different. After emigrating from Albania to the U.S. in the late 1990s, the former teachers worked at minimum wage jobs before they landed machine shop jobs where they leveraged their background knowledge and skills to operate and run their business.

Around 2010 Bebri took a new job after the machine shop where he was working closed. At the same time, they decided to borrow money to buy a CNC machine, renting space for it and running it at night after their daytime jobs. Sales soon began to grow. Bebri and Agastra left their day jobs and bought two additional CNC machines, and moved the business to two industrial condos in Bristol.

They soon outgrew their condo space and purchased an empty factory building on Dolphin Road in Bristol. After completely



“Thanks to the City of Bristol and their grant program for local manufacturers, we were able to achieve ISO certification for our company. And we couldn’t have done it without the guidance and assistance from CONNSTEP who also helped us reinforce a culture of continuous improvement here. The certification to the standard supports our goal of business growth, provides a competitive advantage, and gives our customers a reason to believe in us.”

— Bena Agastra
Precision Express Manufacturing, Bristol CT

remodeling the space with capabilities and capacity to produce more, they tuned their focus to continuing to grow the business. However, to acquire more customers, they knew that PEM would have to become certified to the ISO 9001 standard, a key requirement for many potential new customers and increasingly, existing ones as well.

City of Bristol Grant Program

The City of Bristol established the Manufacturing Technical Assistance Grant Program to help manufacturers gain access to assistance to improve their business. The grants cover up to 50% of out-of-pocket costs associated with engaging in business consultative services.

PEM became aware of the available grant program and decided to apply in order to offset the investment in obtaining certification of their Quality Management System to the ISO 9001:2015 standard, a goal to gain new customers and maintain their existing business. After applying to the grant program and meeting eligibility requirements, their grant funding was approved.

CONNSTEP Consulting Services

In order to obtain the Bristol grant funding, a company has to select and identify a consulting firm, group, or individual they plan to engage, and provide a copy of the proposal of work along with the expected outcomes to measure project success.

PEM turned to CONNSTEP, a Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Center in the state with experienced subject matter experts, to assist their efforts in becoming certified to

the ISO 9001:2015 standard. The services contracted with CONNSTEP included both the implementation of the standard at PEM and an internal quality audit.

The Process

Bebri and Agastra understood the importance of the ISO process, having had exposure to it in their previous manufacturing jobs. CONNSTEP provided implementation guidance and mentoring, following an agreed upon schedule.

CONNSTEP examined PEM's existing documentation and practices to determine their degree of conformance to the key elements of ISO 9001:2015, and facilitated the identification of information specified by the standard that supports the company's business operations.

Training and education was provided to the PEM owners and their employees to ensure their understanding of the requirements of ISO 9001:2015 as well as their roles and responsibilities. CONNSTEP conducted an internal quality audit over four sessions and also assisted PEM in preparation for an audit by the Certification Body (CB).

The Outcome

During the audit by the CB, they determined the initial audit conducted by CONNSTEP was very thorough and there were no non-conformances (NC), meaning no failure to meet a requirement, and there was no Opportunity for Improvement (OFI). As a result, PEM was awarded certification to the ISO 9001:2015 standard for their organization.



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