

Seeking New Heights: Strategic Planning Fosters Vertical Market Expansion for Manufacturer

Customer Profile

Twenty-four years ago, in Suwanee, Ga., a prototyping facility was founded to serve the new product development needs of customers. As the technology sector surged in the 1980s, companies associated with the industry began to divide into functional categories: those that design, develop, and market products versus companies that primarily build products. Prime Technological Services fell into the latter category and in the ensuing several years, began conducting beta production runs to eventually become a small production facility in the electronics manufacturing services market.

Eighteen years later, Prime Technological Services was purchased by Greg Chesnutt and his partners at Jordan Blanchard Capital (JBC), a Columbus, Ga. based alternative asset management firm that invests in middle-market manufacturing and distribution companies. Since acquiring Prime, Chesnutt and his partners have invested in people development, capital equipment, and process improvements with a goal of transforming the company into a leading moderate-volume, high-mix Electronic Manufacturing Services (EMS) provider that designs, tests, manufactures and distributes printed circuit boards to specific vertical markets.

Situation

Since purchasing the company, Chesnutt, now the CEO of Prime Technological Services, has been working with his core group of managers to implement lean practices into the facility, as well as develop an educational component designed to shift company culture into a lean mindset.

Once the company processes started taking shape, Chesnutt began to examine ways to grow the business. By looking at it from a strategic perspective, Chesnutt and his team were able to define the elements of their business that were unique and in which they excelled. By conducting this analysis, the aerospace / defense industry and the medical device industry were identified as the two vertical markets that best aligned well with the company's capabilities. From there, the team was able to develop a set of actionable items to help facilitate a multi-year growth plan for the company.

Solution

The company had an ISO 9001 quality management system in place and sent their quality manager, Jay Jackson, to a lead auditor training course to learn how to approach the system and procedures from an auditor's point of view. The course, taught by the **Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP)** at Georgia Tech introduced Jackson to Ade Shitta-Bey, the course instructor and project manager for the GaMEP.

Chesnutt, Jackson, and Andrey Karnauch, director of operations met, with Shitta-Bey to discuss ways they could build upon their current management system in order to align with their new vertical target markets. Shitta-Bey began helping them ramp up to get their certifications in AS9100 and ISO 13485, the quality management systems for the aerospace industry and medical device industry, respectively. Shitta-Bey conducted a gap analysis on their management system and then helped map out and develop the procedures that would get them from where they currently were to where they wanted to be and trained 95 percent of their staff on the new systems.

By implementing these two new industry-focused quality management systems, Prime Technological Services is beginning to see business development opportunities and is being sought as a potential manufacturing partner to early stage companies. The company has also positioned itself as a supplier for companies transitioning back to U.S. manufacturers.

The company is continuing its internal audit cycle training for AS9100, preparing for their stage 2 audit, and continuing to invest in workforce development so that they can be equipped as new opportunities arise.

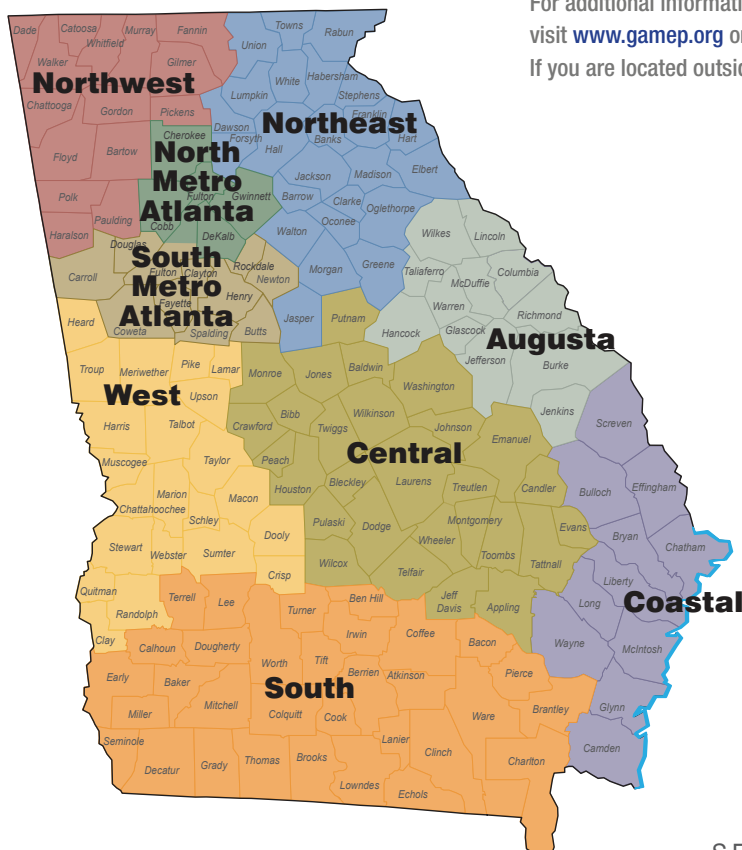
Results

With the help of the GaMEP, Prime Technological Services:

- Successfully implemented AS9100
- Passed both the stage 1 and stage 2 audits
- Trained 95 percent of their 75 employees on the standards and processes for AS9100
- Implemented ISO 13485, providing the opportunity to become the manufacturing partner to four medical device companies and grow their business to align with the strategic plan
- Is seeking additional certifications to align with their business strategy
- Successfully worked with two companies to transition business from overseas back to the United States, contributing to increased business and establishing new job opportunities in Georgia

Testimonial

"Ade Shitta-Bey has been extremely knowledgeable and instrumental in helping implement additional quality management systems within our organization. We have found great value in continuing to tap into the GaMEP resources," Chesnutt said.



For additional information about GaMEP services, visit www.gamep.org or contact the regional manager in your area. If you are located outside of Georgia, contact Karen Fite, State Regional Network Manager.

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