

Franklin Bronze makes investments

Franklin Bronze Precision Components is a world leader in the manufacture of investment castings for the glass container industry and also manufactures investment castings for many industrial sectors including automotive, steel and valve and pump.

Most recently, Franklin Bronze has been making significant investments in people, process, products and equipment to increase productivity and efficiency; improve customer responsiveness; and drive innovation.

Investment in its people

FBPC is located in Franklin and employs a workforce of approximately 100 people. John Nichols was hired in July 2016 as general manager. He brings 30 years of experience in castings with a concentration in investment castings.

As general manager, Nichols leads the Franklin Bronze team to develop and grow the business with a strong focus on safety, continuous improvement, quality, innovation and customer service.

Franklin Bronze, through the leadership and direction of Nichols, is actively working on a broad range of workforce development initiatives including a vigorous cross-training program.

"We are proud to have received funding from WED-Net, which serves Pennsylvania's manufacturers. The funding has been used to train operators and staff in Supervisory skills, Lean and other modern manufacturing techniques," Nichols said.

The Supervisory Skills Training was conducted at Manufacturer & Business Association in Erie. The training course, held over a five-month period, provides new and experienced managers with sound management practices, proper discipline techniques, resolution of conflict and minimization of stress.

Recent graduates of this program include Chris Barber, cleaning and grinding supervisor; Sherry Miller, shipping supervisor; and Ed Wolfgang, machine shop team leader.

Currently, Sam Lyons, foundry supervisor, and Anthony Haag, wax room team leader, are engaged in this training.

Employees from finance to machining to maintenance participated in a four-part Lean Champion Certification Course. The course was led by NWIRC, an organization that develops and supports small to mid-sized manufacturers in northwestern Pennsylvania.

The Lean Training focuses on continuous improvement, quality, efficiency, change management, workplace safety, employee engagement and elimination of waste. Employees who graduated from the course are Stacy Reiser, finance manager; Rick Wolbert, machine and tool room supervisor; Jim Barber, purchasing and IT manager; Jesse Rice, maintenance supervisor; Jon Niles, health and safety specialist; Mark Sanner, shell room supervisor; Sam Lyons, foundry supervisor; and Bill VanWormer, wax press operator.



Neil Kruse, a new product development engineer at Franklin Bronze, has trained with the company's former owner, Bob Barber, to gain practical skills in casting process engineering.

As a result of Lean training, a Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Program, led by Lean Champion Stacy Reiser, has been introduced facility-wide to encourage all employees' involvement in efficiency, safety and cost reduction.

To date, 100 employees working to improve operations has led to 147 suggestions, 65 of which have been implemented and the remainder in-process. CCIP projects are submitted and fulfilled on a daily basis.

In addition to the outside training, FBPC is also developing its own training model



Franklin Bronze employees Chris Barber, Ed Wolfgang and Sherry Miller are recent graduates of a five-month Supervisory Skills Training program.

to support and develop young engineers.

For more than a year, new product development engineer Neil Kruse has had the opportunity to train with Bob Barber, former owner of Franklin Bronze. Kruse has acquired practical skills in casting process engineering to complement the formal education he received at Penn State University.

He also participated in the Investment Casting Institute's Industry Certification Course this past summer.

Combining formal, classroom-based technical education with practical hands-on training will ensure developing engineers are successful at Franklin Bronze Precision Components.

As FBPC grows, this training model will ensure strong technical resources are in place to support that growth.

Better layout

The company believes an optimized facility layout

brings better flow, communication and collaboration.

After evaluation of processes and workflow, the facility went through a layout re-design. Process flow was optimized for rapid product movement from department to department. The re-designed layout has created higher velocity through the plant and promotes communication and collaboration.

Product development

In order to develop new products, FBPC has added equipment and advanced methods to pour a new range of Inconel superalloys and has introduced rapid prototyping through 3-D printed waxes to their investment casting process.

Castings manufactured in Inconel superalloys are used for various high-temperature wear applications. Some examples include actuation pivot shaft castings used in turbochargers for the automotive industry, valve seats, and le-

ver arms used in the valve and pump industry.

FBPC deploys 3-D printing prototyping in partnership with customers' engineering teams. New advancements in 3-D printing technology has allowed for rapid, small order prototyping with no need for wax model tooling. Now, FBPC can more quickly prove out the part and process to determine success.

New equipment for additional capacity

Additional facility improvements include the purchase of new CNC milling and turning equipment. This purchase was made to provide additional capacity in the machine shop for both large and small castings that require machining.

Through investments in people, processes, products and equipment, Franklin Bronze Precision Components continues to deliver to the market world-class products and technical solutions.