



“We’re really like a mini-conglomerate manufacturer with a number of different autonomous business units,” said CEO Sam Bergami. He pointed to the company’s recent capital investments, which include a 17,000-square-foot expansion to its corporate headquarters in Milford, Connecticut, as indicative of Alinabal’s confidence in its future. “Our expansion brings our total manufacturing space up to approximately 200,000 square feet. We have invested and we plan to augment that investment to the tune of about \$4 million,” he said.

This expansion is especially significant because it comes at a time when, in the face of a recession, many of Alinabal’s peers are struggling to stay afloat. Bergami credits the company’s implementation of the ATIP concept for its continued success. “We were ahead of the curve because we’ve been working on our culture of continuous improvement for the past 10 or 11 years,” he said. “Any company considering implementing a similar program now is too late for the game.”

Alinabal, Bergami explained, is customer oriented. “We are running at a 99.3 percent delivery performance and that certainly is serving the customer. It’s not only encouraging but almost unheard of in the markets we serve. I don’t think anybody out there in our peer group is close to that,” he said.

With a workforce of 340 employed at three Connecticut sites, Alinabal’s business is growing and achieving worldwide excellence. “And that’s despite the fact that the market we serve is not,” said Mike Murphy, vice president and general manager of the company’s Motion Transfer Device Group. “We continue to attract new customers for a number of reasons—among them our quick service. It’s something we can offer because we have made extensive investments in our IT infrastructure that enables us to connect through various electronic media,” he said. “In the spirit of ATIP, we continuously invest in automation and production enhancements and have made many investments where some of our competitors have not.”

In the early days, Alinabal saw quick gains in its continuous improvement process. Now, though the gains may only be in tenths of percents, Bergami says they may not be quite as dramatic, but they are still significant. “For example, we are shipping at 99.3 percent on time. To get to 99.7 percent is only four tenths of a percent gain, but ▶

# Striving for excellence

*Top brass at the Alinabal Group discuss the success of the company's continuous improvement culture with Cynthia Garber*

**P**ut in place more than a decade ago, Alinabal’s unique Total Quality Management Process “ATIP” (Alinabal Total Improvement Process) is paying off big time, according to company executives who point out that Alinabal is gaining market share in a shrinking market. Today, Alinabal is showing a dramatic increase in productivity and product quality as well as a decrease in employee turnover, absenteeism, and worker’s compensation claims.

The diversified manufacturer of precision stampings and assemblies, spherical rod end bearings and linkages as well as specialty printers began life in 1913 as a supplier of laminated materials for Henry Ford’s Model T. Though the automotive industry remains a major destination for Alinabal products, the company has now become a player in the aerospace, defense, industrial, recreational vehicle, lawn, garden, and medical sectors.

#### Top

Alinabal produces a complete line of Rod End Bearings using various assembly methods, including injection molding

#### Bottom Left

Product quality is verified using the latest technologies such as this optical Coordinate Measuring Machine

#### Bottom Right

In the Engineered Products Group(EPG) Alinabal uses state of the art laser equipment

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it takes a huge amount of effort. Though the gains are not as dramatic as they were in the beginning, we will never stop seeking improvement," he said.

Paul Kelley, vice president and general manager of the Engineered Products Group, said that among the factors helping the ATIP philosophy succeed is the company's positive relationship with its non-union workforce. "We enlist employee involvement through our ATIP Forum and as such we have one of the higher retention rates for employee tenure in our area. Not only owners and management, but all of our employees benefit from the success of the company by virtue of employment security," he said.

The implementation of lean manufacturing techniques has become a major focus at Alinabal, and strong employee involvement has led to success in that area as well. "For example, we took a product line lead time down from 14 days to two days by doing Kaizen, and the folks who participated in this activity were not high powered consultants or management but the people who

perform the job every day. They are the people who looked at the problems, found the solutions, and got the desired results," Kelley said.

And, because Alinabal understands the value of the influence of its supply chain on the final product, the company has very stringent requirements of what Murphy refers to as the company's supplier/partners. "We have a very well organized SAT (Supplier Assessment Team) which performs detailed on-site audits," he said. "The team is constantly reviewing and rating performances in areas of not only delivery and quality but the suppliers suggestions for cost improvements."

Alinabal is certified to the latest ISO Standards primarily ISO 9000/2000; the automotive standard of QS900; and the aerospace standards of AS9100A. Bergami stated "There are probably only a handful of companies in the United States that hold all three designations for these strict international standards, and that's an accomplishment that we're very proud of." ●

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## COMPANIES

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- Specializing in Complex Mechanical Assemblies

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