

Pro-active Job Shops Prosper In a Shrinking Finishing Market

By Don Berry, Editor

Plating and finishing job shops in the U.S. have seen business decline in recent years, a trend that is still continuing.

Some job shops, however, seem to buck the trend and are continuing to prosper, and in some cases even increase production.

Reliable Plating Works, Inc., Elite Finishing, LLC (Milwaukee, WI), and Dixie Industrial Finishing, Inc. (Tucker, GA) are finishing shops that have continued to grow and prosper. And, the companies have a lot in common. They are pro-active in the community, in local, state and federal affairs, and they promote a culture of close family-type or team relationships among employees.

Reliable Plating Works, Inc.

Reliable Plating Works (RPW) is a family-owned third generation company that offers decorative and functional nickel/chrome finishes on steel products. The company utilizes large, fully automated plating lines that produce large volumes of products at competitive prices and reduced lead times.

The shop is run by the Maliszewski brothers—Jaime, Jack and Jeff—who have worked as a team there for many years. They learned their business sense and ethics from their father, John “Big John” Maliszewski, and their grandfather and founder of RPW, Julian Maliszewski. Jaime serves as president and CEO of RPW.

It was the leadership and foresight of the Maliszewski brothers that gave birth to Elite Finishing LLC, and Brilliance LLC.



The Maliszewski brothers of Reliable Plating Works (l-r): Jack, Jaime and Jeff.

Elite Finishing was started in 2001 as a partnership between the Maliszewski brothers and Dave Scherzer and Ken Kazubowski of the Sigma Group. It was created to fill a niche in the nickel/chrome finishing industry on aluminum and brass products. The company was started with financial assistance from Milwaukee Economic Development Corp., the Small Business Administration, and Lincoln State Bank. The project included the renovation of a dilapidated building and the installation of modern plating equipment and processes.

Since then, RPW has purchased the majority interest in Elite Finishing and

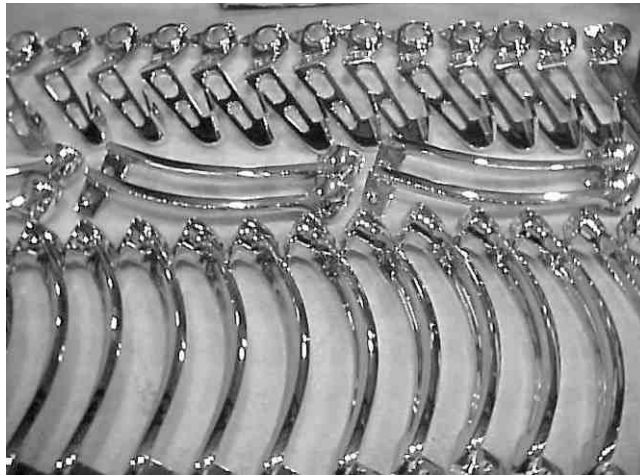
Jaime Maliszewski is also serving as general manager of the company.

It was Jaime who convinced two of his friends (John Lindstedt of Artistic Plating Company and Al Henry of Chrometech of Wisconsin) to develop a holding company, Brilliance LLC, to minimize costs, increase profits, and gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Brilliance LLC currently represents five finishing companies, collectively taking care of their health and dental insurance, business and workers compensation insurance, marketing, lease programs, human resources, safety issues, and employee training. Brilliance represents more than



Large plating racks are used on Reliable Plating Works' automated lines.



These chromium-plated brake components are finished at Reliable.

250 employees, and collectively, the arrangement saves each member company thousands of dollars each year.

RPW has grown steadily, doubling sales over the past three years, when other job shops have been seeing business decline. Elite Finishing has also seen steady growth since Jaime took over as general manager about two years ago. During that time, Elite has more than doubled sales, and has increased its workforce by more than 200 percent.

RPW, the old established one, recently celebrated its 75th anniversary. The company has been a continuous supplier to Georgia Pacific since 1929, and is Broan Nutone's only continuous supplier since that company started up in 1935.

All of this success just didn't happen. Much of it can be credited to the Maliszewski's forward thinking, and their commitment to employees, the community and the industry.

Locally, Jaime is involved on many fronts, such as chairing the St. Francis Foundation's Greg Rose Memorial Golf Outing, which raised \$60,000 for St. Francis Hospital's Cardiac Care Programs and Child Development Center this year alone. RPW also supports area high school athletics.

As a member of the Board of Directors of the AESF Milwaukee Branch, Jaime is working with Discovery World to start a new science fair in Milwaukee for junior high and high school students.

RPW and Elite are member companies of NAMF, and Jaime regularly represents the shops at government relations activities, such as the SFIC Washington Forum in Washington, DC.

Establishing sound workplace principles, promoting community involvement and keeping abreast of local, state and federal regulations is paying dividends for RPW and Elite Finishing. Not only are the two job shops prospering, RPW was



A group of Dixie Industrial Finishing's "family" pose with the "Manufacturer of the Year" award.

recognized as "Wisconsin's Small Family Business of the Year," and the "Region V Small Family Business of the Year" Small Business Administration Awards in 2005.

Dixie Industrial Finishing

Dixie Industrial Finishing Company, Inc., is a 45 year old company that has made quite an impact on the area around Tucker, GA.

A company that does \$8.3 million in business each year, the company employs about 100 workers, most of them living in the local area.

The company provides finishing for a number of manufacturing sectors, including aerospace, automotive, electrical distribution, electronic, construction, agricultural and lawn and garden. The customer base includes small, medium and large manufacturers.

Dixie Industrial has seen its business grow in recent years, and the company is in a position to see continued growth as one of the premier businesses in the community.

Like RPW, Dixie Industrial promotes a family-oriented workplace. It considers all employees to be family, and encourages all to be active in community affairs.

And like RPW, Dixie Industrial is a member of NAMF. Jim Jones, Vice President of Sales for Dixie Industrial, is a member of AESF and regularly represents the company at industry functions, including SFIC-sponsored Government Relations functions.

"I encourage all manufacturers to be an advocate for all of manufacturing, and to let their voice be heard on how decisions are made in Atlanta and Washington that effect their business, industry, and the families that depend on it," Jones said.

Dixie Industrial Finishing is not only enjoying the financial rewards that go along with pro-active involvement, it also is getting recognition from local officials. This year, the company was named "Manufacturer of the Year" by Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue during Manufacturing Appreciation Week in April. The finishing shop was nominated for the honor by DeKalb Technical College, the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, and the DeKalb County Development Authority, for its commitment to community, employees, vendors, partners, and the environment.

"Dixie is a fine example of what can be accomplished when an organization functions not only as a team, but as a family, where each individual is treated with the same amount of respect and appreciation, said Dr. Robin Hofman, President of DeKalb Technical College. "We are lucky to have them as neighbors, partners and friends."

Getting involved and staying involved on a local, state and federal level can produce significant rewards for finishers. *P&SF*



The management team from Reliable Plating Works shown at a recent meeting at the shop.