



GALLEY SUPPORT INNOVATIONS SUCCESS STORY

The Situation

Gina Radke and her husband, Wade, were living in Florida when they decided they were ready to start their own business. The timing couldn't have been more perfect as Wade's Uncle was interested in moving away from the business the family started in the 1950s. Thinking it a horrible idea at first, the Radkes came around and eventually bought the rights to the products and equipment originally owned by Wade's grandfather using money from the sale of their home in Florida. The result was Galley Support Innovations, GSI for short, today's leading designer and manufacturer of interior hardware for aircraft.

The Radkes looked at relocating the business from California to Texas but decided on Arkansas where Gina grew up, primarily due to the state's competitive cost of living and cost of doing business. In the beginning, the company strictly served commercial aviation companies but has since focused more and more on private aviation.

The Challenge

The jumping off point came when GSI began developing a product for Dassault Falcon Jet. Gina and Wade met leaders from Dassault Falcon and Gulfstream at trade shows and began working with them. Dassault Falcon has a sizable operation in Central Arkansas, which has proven advantageous for the business partnership.

As the private aviation business side of the company grew, it was imperative for the company to meet the needs of a distinguishing customer base accustomed to luxury. GSI's personalized design capabilities set the company apart from its competitors. Rather than picking stock options out of a catalog, GSI's customers receive personalized designs just for them.

The Solution

It's a business that could operate from any number of locations across the country, but the Radkes have found that there is something special in Arkansas that has enabled them to grow GSI. They credit the support they have received from state and local leaders as being a game-changer in addition to the costs of doing business.

"We have had tremendous support from both the North Little Rock and Sherwood Chambers of Commerce," Radke said. "Arkansas has got to have one of the best business communities out there. The entire business community seems concerned about everyone having success. Everyone has been collaborative and helpful."



The Results

Today, GSI has grown from a husband-and-wife team to 42 employees producing just under \$5 million in annual sales. The company plans to continue to diversify to remain strong, taking on other aircraft assets as well as moving into marine vessels including private yachts and commercial cruise lines.

One of their biggest challenges is getting the labor force needed to carry the company forward. Careers such as computer numeric control machinists and programmers don't require college degrees and are ideally suited for high-school graduates with specialized training. To help find and develop workers, GSI is looking to North Little Rock High School's Center of Excellence to hire graduates out of the newly developed program. The company also works closely with University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College to create training programs for new employees.

GSI also utilized programs through the State of Arkansas to help get the business off the ground. Arkansas Manufacturing Solutions helped with quality audits. The Technology Transfer Assistance Grant (TTAG) program provided funds that enabled GSI to bid on those initial projects with Gulfstream. A Community Development Block Grant made it possible for GSI to purchase specialized software required by Gulfstream.

FAST FACT

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“The support from the state has been phenomenal over the past 14 years,” said Radke. “As you grow, it’s tough. But with the changing of tech funding for schools, Arkansas is moving forward. I believe the next five to 10 years will see a better environment that’s even more supportive for advanced manufacturing jobs.”

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