

Advanced Laser Machining, Inc.

Advanced Laser Machining, Inc. (ALM), a manufacturing firm specializing in high tech laser cutting and CNC punching mild steel, stainless steel and aluminum, was started in 1996 in a rather unique way. John Walton and Rod Tegels, the owners of ALM, won the “Create Your Own Business Plan” contest sponsored by the Eau Claire Economic Development Corporation. As a result, they received financing that was instrumental in starting ALM and locating them in the Chippewa Valley Incubation Center.



Advanced Laser has shown steady growth from the start and by 1998, this growth prompted them to relocate from the Incubation Center to leasing a 17,000 square foot facility in the Chippewa Falls Riverside Industrial Park, their current location. Due to this continued growth, ALM purchased their facility in 2003. SBA was able to assist them with this purchase through our 504 program and in 2004 SBA was again able to assist ALM to expand their facility to nearly double the size. This steady growth has resulted in a twenty percent employment growth over the last five years. ALM started the business with four employees and now has thirty-one.

In 1999, the metal fabrication industry experienced a downturn and the events of 9/11 adversely affected Advanced Laser when several of their major customers reduced or eliminated orders. John and Rod’s response to overturn these obstacles was to diversify their customer base by shifting their sales focus to Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and continuing to invest in equipment and employee training. John and Rod knew that efficient companies with increased capabilities and well-trained employees would survive and thrive.

Through Advanced Laser, John and Rod contribute significantly to local causes. Some of these local causes are the Chippewa County Humane Association, Junior Achievement, Main Street Association, the ALS Walk and Irvine Park. In addition, Advanced Laser is the sole source for all metal requirements at the Chippewa Falls High School’s metal shop and over ninety percent of the school’s material is donated by ALM.

John and Rod received Honorable Mention in Wisconsin’s SBA Small Business Person of the Year Awards for 2006. This was accomplished by John and Rod’s work ethic to give the consumer the best product available, the first time and every time, with no buts and no excuses. They are hard working, focused, resilient individuals with the ability to overcome obstacles, learn from them and make the proper adjustments to achieve success as well as supporting and adding to the economic development of their community. This is the success story of true entrepreneurs that exemplifies the American dream of owning your own business, being successful at it, and contributing to your community. SBA is proud to have been able to share in Advance Laser Machining’s, success!