

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA METAL FABRICATOR EXPLORES NEW MARKETS BEYOND COAL INDUSTRY

ABOUT LAWRENCE BROS., INC. Since 1973, Lawrence Brothers, Inc. (LBI) has provided customers with exceptional quality products and outstanding customer service. Their Bluefield, Virginia, facility employs about 60 workers maintaining over 80,000 square feet of manufacturing equipment providing an array of fabrication techniques.

THE CHALLENGE. For nearly half a century, LBI's primary customer had been the coal industry producing mine battery trays and other fabrications. With the industry's downturn, company management sought outside assistance to diversify into new markets to remain competitive. LBI was well into their growth journey for ten years before being introduced to GENEDGE, a NIST MEP affiliate, through the Heart Project of the Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing (SVAM). SVAM is a non-profit organization focused on supporting and strengthening manufacturers in the region. A large portion of the associated costs with these projects would be covered through GENEDGE's Virginia Rural DOD Supply Chain Program and supplemented through the SVAM Center of Excellence's Heart Project.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. GENEDGE began by conducting a CoreValue Software Discover® assessment to analyze their business and identify any value gaps to be addressed. Based on the results of that assessment, GENEDGE offered to continue the process by facilitating a deep dive into the company's current operational and market capabilities. Management also expressed interest in the development of a Quality Management System (QMS). They felt becoming an ISO registered business would provide additional new market opportunities to continue growing their business. GENEDGE's Sam Wolford led the implementation through an approved third-party QMS service provider. This effort involved identifying gaps between current QMS practices and necessary components required for compliance, identification of required documentation and methods to capture and maintain required documentation. Additional opportunities were revealed through that initial deep-dive assessment, including a proposal for services utilizing the Business Growth Accelerator approach. Focusing efforts on growing their business through developing ideas and concepts as a part of a growth accelerator process could provide significant value. Potential new and non-traditional market opportunities should be considered an important project component.

"Our collaboration with GENEDGE has been integral to the continued growth and process improvement of Lawrence Brothers. We have been able to set our company apart not only as the premiere employer in the area, but also further establish our reputation as a leading-edge manufacturer with the highest quality standards to our customers. In my honest opinion, the work that GENEDGE is doing in Southwest Virginia is vital to not only the survival, but to the growth of our region."

-Melanie Protti-Lawrence, President

RESULTS



\$1,250,000 in anticipated new or retained sales



\$1,380,000 in new investment



\$30,000 in anticipated cost savings



32 anticipated created or retained jobs

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