

Martin Stein: Creating Operational Excellence at QIP

Martin Stein, president of Quality Imaging Products (QIP), has quite a track record of improving operations at manufacturing companies. And since joining QIP more than two years ago, he has implemented manufacturing changes that resulted in QIP doubling its capacity, improving its quality levels, and increasing its service levels, all the while using only 90 percent of the space previously allotted to production at its Lake Forest, Calif., facility.



“When I joined QIP, the organization had gone through a lot of growth, and needed a new way to systematically produce cartridges,” Stein said. “In February 2002, we started working with Toyota to examine our entire production philosophy. We moved from line production to a cellular approach, from batch processes to one-piece flow, and from segregated to integrated manufacturing. These three changes have made marked improvements in our ability to serve our customers.”

Stein’s operational improvements at QIP are not his first foray into manufacturing. In fact, his manufacturing roots run deep — three generations. Growing up, Stein worked on the corn-dog line at his grandfather’s meatpacking plant in Georgia, and also worked as a forklift operator in the receiving department of his stepfather’s manufacturing facility in Michigan.

With such a deep manufacturing background, it isn’t surprising that Stein has spent quite a bit of time “looking at different operational systems and ways to improve them.”

Stein earned his bachelor’s degree in political philosophy from the University of Chicago, where he was a College Honors Scholar, received numerous first place national debate awards and was named to *USA Today’s* All-USA College Academic First Team. Stein also earned an MBA from the Harvard Business School, with a concentration in technology and operations management.

Stein has worked for the Council for Excellence in Government, where he helped increase efficiency at branches of the federal government such as the Department of Labor, the FAA, and the Department of Energy. Stein also has experience in the consulting industry having worked for several years at Mercer Management Consulting, where he consulted to companies such as Dow, Sears, Pfizer and Searle. At Mercer, Stein was also the team leader and helped write the book “The Profit Zone,” which examined how business leaders helped their companies to create substantial market value over extended periods of time. In 1998, the book was named

one of *BusinessWeek’s* top books of the year and was listed on both *The New York Times* and Amazon.com bestseller lists. After Mercer, Stein worked at the Weatherchem Corp., a leading manufacturer of closures for the food and pharmaceutical industries. At Weatherchem, Stein helped implement processes to improve operations, which led to increased asset efficiency, improved productivity, and reduced inventory levels.

Just prior to working at QIP, Stein was the president of Blackford Capitol, a Chicago-based private equity firm focused on middle market manufacturing companies. Blackford acquired QIP because “the industry was growing, profitable, fragmented, moderately-sized, and, most importantly, operationally excellent companies stood a good chance of succeeding.”

Under Stein’s leadership, QIP has grown from 100 to 150 employees, produces 40,000 cartridges a month, and offers more than 200 different types of toner and inkjet cartridges. Last summer, QIP was selected as “One Of The Best Companies To Work For” by *OC Metro Magazine*, a leading business journal in Southern California. Stein has also expanded the management team and recently brought in a partner, Paul McDonnell, to help him run the organization.

While QIP produces both toner and inkjet cartridges, the company has made a “big push into inkjet lately, and it has gone well for us.” QIP has expanded its line to include all of the top HP and Canon inkjet cartridges and is adding remanufactured Lexmark and compatible Epson and Canon inkjets.

Stein has made another big push lately — into married life. He recently wed his longtime girlfriend, who he met in college at the University of Chicago 13 years ago. The two have traveled together to Costa Rica, the Bahamas, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Tahiti, and, continuing their spirit of adventure, enjoyed a honeymoon in Bali, Indonesia, during June.

Stein’s other passions include a variety of physical activities including marathons, triathlons, and ultra-marathon cycling such as a 24-hour bike race where Stein rode more than 350 miles nonstop. He has also made a 3,700-mile bike trip from Seattle to Washington, D.C.

With a track record of perseverance and dedication like that, it’s not surprising he has been so effective at QIP. Despite the significant increases in production in the last year, Stein said he is dedicated to further progress. “There is always room for improvement,” he said. “The road to perfection never ends.” □

Contact Stein at martin_stein@qip.net