

## **Boss Industries Inc.**

Boss Industries Inc. of La Porte, Indiana, grew from the vision of Patrick Wilkins, President, and four colleagues in 1988. The company now has 50 employees, primarily involved in engineering and design. It has continued to expand and occupies a new 50,000 square foot engineering and manufacturing facility in the Thomas Rose Industrial Park in La Porte. The company designs and distributes power takeoff, air compressor and generation systems used primarily in municipal services, power utilities, and energy exploration and development, the construction industry, and for the military. Boss Industries' products are sold and serviced through a network of 105 distributors in the United States and Canada.

During the 1980s, Mr. Wilkins had been employed at the Sullair, Inc. plant in nearby Michigan City, Indiana. Sullair is a leading national manufacturer of air compressor equipment. Mr. Wilkins had the idea to design a complete and integrated system to link a truck to an air compressor unit. This involves designing the product around a truck as a power take-off application (PTO). The incorporation of a PTO into the truck frees-up the truck to pull another piece of



equipment, such as a backhoe. This saves one truck, and staff, that in existing set-ups would be required to haul a separate compressor unit. This innovation results in considerable cost savings, especially for those involved in oil and gas exploration and other remote site operations.

According to Mr. Wilkins, locating in La Porte has been a critical ingredient for Boss Industries' success. The company requires access to chassis manufacturers and sub-contractors in truck body manufacturing. La Porte is in the center of this industry in the Upper Midwest region, particularly close to specialty truck manufacturers in Northern Indiana. Mr. Wilkins mentioned that the company has multiple, high quality suppliers of important

components such as machine parts, sheet metals, and powder coating services. All of these products and services are close by, given the concentration of automotive industry suppliers in the region. "Within 50 miles there are four or five quality shops for most parts that Boss Industries needs to purchase," said Mr. Wilkins.

Access to skilled labor, technical, and engineering talent is vital to the company. The company employs a number of graduates of Purdue University, Indiana University, the University of Notre Dame, DePauw University and Rose Holman Technical Institute. Nearby access to contract engineering consulting services from the University of Notre Dame and Purdue University is also an important advantage.

A La Porte location provides a cost of living edge, lowering employment costs over rivals who are situated in major metropolitan areas. Lower costs do not mean lower quality, in terms of workforce. Mr. Wilkins states that Boss Industries has a low employee turnover rate. Employees tend to stay as they value the long-term relationships on the job, and the company "becomes family". Mr. Wilkins also lauded the low price he paid for the 10 acres of land purchased in the Thomas Rose Industrial Park. This lower priced real estate was yet another benefit experienced by locating in La Porte.

Success for Boss Industries requires quick turn-around to respond to bids from customers. A well-integrated technical team needs to develop specifications and terms often with very little lead-time. At the La Porte Municipal Airport, the company has a corporate aircraft that is available in order to meet with customers to review specifications at a moment's notice. The airport taxiway, runway, and other facilities can accommodate all corporate aircraft. This gives the company a significant time advantage over other companies that rely on scheduled service of the major airlines. Mr. Wilkins has access, door-to-door, to all his customers in 6 hours or less. He believes that a flight to a potential client's offices or a flight to bring them to La Porte is a "deal sealer" nearly every time. In a fast-paced and competitive business, one-on-one contact is an essential key to business success for Boss Industries.