

# Local firm in forefront of precision technology

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A local company is at the forefront of bringing precision technology to the shop floor by measuring tools in the workplace.

The method combines two high-tech measuring devices that allow machine parts and tools ranging from inches to 230 feet to be micro measured.

Employing a Laser Tracker in tandem with a FaroArm, both manufactured by FARO Technologies of Lake Mary, Fla., Windsor's Avid Quality Group is carving out a niche in a world where change is often looked at skeptically.

Angela Snary, Avid's 33-year-old co-founder and systems director, said "my job essentially is to convince company CEO's that our technology is just as accurate as anything they can get off-site, it's cheaper, it creates less down time and it's more convenient because the parts don't have to be shipped out to get measured."

The system combines the use of the Laser Tracker to set targets on equipment foundations and machine frames, creating a 3-D digital image which is captured on a computer. The FaroArm is then used to digitize areas hidden from the Tracker's line of sight and both sets of data are then used to produce the required measurements.

Snary's background is in process operations, quality control and customer service rather than engineering. But, while working for a local tool and die company, she recognized the need for portable high-precision measuring systems.

Brother Dan is also on board along with Barry Sanson, who brings more than 20 years of automotive experience to his role of operations manager.

And while Snary at first resisted talking about it, the fact she's a woman in a largely male-dominated field is al-

so a factor in developing business.

"Look around, do you see any women?" said Snary one recent morning while working off-site at a local engineering company. "Over the years, people have formed alliances and relationships and our company is trying to break into that field and there's some resistance."

But working out of an office behind a home on Byng Road, Avid has already developed a small clientele across Southwestern Ontario by offering its portable 24/7 services to automotive suppliers, forge shops, tool and die makers and stamping companies.

Sanson said the beauty of the system is that "we can measure parts while they are still on the production line. We can lift them off, measure, inspect and certify and lift them back on all without shutting down the line.

"We're mobile so if we get a call and we're available we can be on-site within 30 to 60 minutes," said Sanson.

## Mum on cost

Snary declined to disclose the cost of the equipment for which she also bought a warranty package which guarantees a replacement within 24 hours in cases of a breakdown. But Sanson said "you could get a very nice house in Windsor for the cost of this technology.

"And because it's expensive, very few places can afford their own," said Sanson. "Instead, they get us with no capital outlay and no overhead."

Pat Fiorino, project manager at KVT Technologies which is a custom machine builder for the plastics industry, said that using Avid's services "makes good business and financial sense.

"They're the experts in this field, they're very flexible and they can accommodate our schedule," said Fiorino, whose company is a subsidiary of Branson Ultrasonics of Danbury, Conn

and a division of Emerson Electronics of St. Louis

"It's more cost-effective to have Avid act as a supplier of services to us rather than doing this in house," said Fiorino.

Avid recently performed verification tests on Avid's fixtures which are used to make finishing machines and automation equipment for the plastics industry

Avid also came within an ace of joining MD Robotics, manufacturers of the Canadarm portion of NASA's shuttle fleet, in retrofitting equipment for the recent Discovery flight.

"As it turned out, they contracted out to someone else but we introduced them to the technology and its possibilities," said Sanson. "So that was gratifying, at least."

In addition to using 3D technology to measure within 3/1,000ths of an inch, Avid technicians perform dimensional verifications, inspections, repeatability studies and engineering for fixture setups and production lines.

Snary said "we're essentially renegades in this business because just about everyone else, and there's nobody else doing this between here and Toronto, builds their system around the measuring device.

"Instead, we work around the part to be measured, we get out on the shop floor, wheel our equipment into place and we're good to go," said Snary. "We interact with the client in their own workplace and we offer precision accuracy at a fraction of the cost and time of shipping out."

Snary is also banking on the fact that industries seeking to remain competitive in a global marketplace will recognize the value in Avid's policy of making house calls.

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**LASER TOOLS:** Daniel Snary shows off the laser tools used by Avid Quality Group to conduct precision on-site measuring for clients.

Star photo: Tyler Brownbridge