

FAB S and LAB S

TRM Microwave



All companies have the goal of being customer focused. Maintaining that goal as the business grows is challenging; it's difficult to sustain relationships as the number of customers expands. TRM Microwave chose a different path to grow: keeping the customer list fairly small and doing more business with each. This approach requires both competency and transparency that, if successful, builds trust and leads to long-lasting relationships.

Started by three guys who were tired of working for a large company, TRM Microwave was formed as Technical Research & Manufacturing Inc. in 1970. Discouraged by the waste he saw within large organizations, Tony Tirollo, one of the founders, left his job to follow his entrepreneurial spirit. He and his co-founders leased an old Radio Shack at Grenier Field (now the Manchester-Boston regional airport) and began developing high-end components for cable television. The company name reflected the start-up's aspirational competencies.

During the ensuing years, the company became TRM Microwave, switched markets from CATV to defense and moved to a larger, 11,000-square-foot building. Tony became the sole owner, married Wendy, and she began learning the business. Wendy led the company's effort to achieve ISO certification, served as the director of human resources and became CEO in 2010 – allowing Tony to devote his time to the technical work he loves.

Tony's expertise is reflected by TRM's product portfolio of passive RF and microwave components, integrated assemblies and subsystems comprised of beam formers, power dividers, couplers and hybrids. These components can also be space-qualified, with the space market now contributing about 30 percent of the company's revenue. TRM's customers include

all the U.S. defense primes, and their products fly on most U.S. fighters as well as the MUOS, TDRS and WGS satellites.

TRM Microwave was recently certified as a woman-owned small business, one of only a few in the RF/microwave industry. According to Wendy, "We polled our top customers regarding the impact this change would have on them, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. They all have supplier diversity requirements dictated to them, and they struggle to meet their goals."

Tony and Wendy's management philosophy is to hire the best, empower people and trust that each person will be accountable for meeting the customer's needs. They also believe in being open with their customers, even when the inevitable technical and schedule problems surface. Mark Schappler, TRM's chief operating officer, explains this philosophy by saying, "We're proud to explain the problem, how we fixed it and what we've done to prevent it in the future."

That philosophy combined with the performance of their products seems to be working. TRM Microwave is growing rapidly, expanding their team by 33 percent within the past year. Revenue grew 17 percent during the first six months of 2015. To support this growth, the company leased a 7,500 square-foot building across the street until the main building can be expanded.

Asked about the future, Wendy says, "TRM just celebrated its 45th anniversary, and my vision is to continue growing and expanding the business for the next 45 years and beyond. TRM Microwave will continue to design ground-breaking RF/microwave components, using technology and unique design approaches which continue to perplex our competition, and build our business by partnering with our valued customers and helping them to reach their goals."

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