

ISM Expands Capabilities with Advanced Manufacturing Technologies

ISM Expands Manufacturing Portfolio Through Strategic Growth

Industrial Sales & Manufacturing (ISM) demonstrates continued market leadership through strategic expansion and technological advancement. The Erie-based manufacturer has strengthened its position with the acquisition of Clifton Tube Cutting in Greenville, PA, while simultaneously enhancing its core manufacturing capabilities.

The acquisition of Clifton Tube Cutting marks a significant milestone in ISM's growth strategy, adding specialized tube cutting expertise to its service portfolio. This strategic move expands ISM's geographical presence in Pennsylvania and brings additional specialized capabilities to serve diverse industry needs.

In its primary facility, ISM has successfully implemented three advanced laser welding cells, revolutionizing their welding operations. These cells, featuring LightWeld technology, demonstrate ISM's commitment to adopting cutting-edge solutions. The laser welding systems deliver exceptional precision and efficiency, particularly in challenging applications requiring high-quality, consistent welds.

Complementing these developments, ISM has also integrated state-of-the-art 5-Axis Machining and a sophisticated robotic turning cell into their operations. This comprehensive suite of advanced manufacturing technologies enables ISM to handle

complex projects with unprecedented precision and efficiency.

"Our recent expansion through the Clifton acquisition, combined with our investment in advanced manufacturing technologies, positions ISM to better serve our customers' evolving needs," says Charlie Rutkowski, ISM's VP of Operations. "The integration of multiple cutting-edge capabilities under one organization allows us to offer comprehensive manufacturing solutions with enhanced efficiency and quality control."

For more information about ISM's expanded capabilities and locations, visit www.ismerie.com or www.clifftubecutting.com.



ISM stretches over six facilities with a total floor plan encompassing over 140,000 square feet. Over 160 employees provide Machining, Fabrication, Assembly, Testing and Finishing services for some 750 customers.



ISM

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Industrial Sales & Mfg., Inc.'s Founder Has Built a Strong Manufacturing Legacy



In celebration of its 120th year, the Manufacturer & Business Association (MBA) is recognizing leaders of

longtime member organizations who have contributed to the Association's longevity, the regional business community as well as their own operations and industries. Here, **James Rutkowski Sr.**, founder of Industrial Sales & Manufacturing, Inc. (ISM), 2609 West 12th Street in Millcreek Township, shares how the three-generation, family owned business grew out of a simple drill press in the garage of Rutkowski's home to a premier contract manufacturer and trusted supplier of high-quality machined, fabricated and assembled components for original equipment manufacturers.

You've been recognized as an icon of industry in our region. Reflecting on your journey with Industrial Sales & Mfg., Inc. since 1967, what are you most proud of when it comes to your business?

Starting from humble beginnings in our family garage with just a Fosdick drill press, what I'm most proud of is how we've built ISM into a true cornerstone of Erie County's manufacturing sector while staying true to

our core values. Over these 57 years, we've grown to employ over 150 hard-working Pennsylvanians across six facilities, produced more than 25,000 distinct parts, and served over 800 companies.

Most importantly, we've remained true to our promise of being 'Better, Faster, and Smarter Than Anyone Else' while maintaining our roots in the community. The fact that we can compete with much larger companies while staying nimble and continuing to evolve with new technologies and capabilities — that's something I take great pride in.

Success does not come without adversity. What were some of the key challenges you faced in the early years and how did you overcome them?

Beyond the numbers, what truly makes me proud is how we've maintained our commitment to quality and our people through every challenge — whether it was recessions, offshore competition, material shortages, or credit crunches. We've created an environment where employees are treated with dignity and respect, and they share in the company's success. It's especially meaningful to see how this has become a three-generation family business, with my children and grandchildren helping to carry forward the values and work ethic that Joan and I established back in 1967.

What does it mean to you to have such business longevity?

I don't think Industrial Sales & Mfg. would be this far along in this life of 57 years without these three children of mine — my sons Jimmy and Charlie, and my daughter Ann. They're the ones that perpetuated this growth of Industrial Sales and what it is today.

It started in my garage with a drill press that I paid \$110 for, and back then \$110 was a lot of money, putting down \$10 down a week. It was a very challenging thing.

Even back when it was Industrial Sales Company, I remember one Friday that I had no money to buy groceries. The total amount of money that I had in my very existence was 15 cents, and I had to wait until Saturday to get a check so I could buy anything.

We just rolled up our sleeves and went to work, and kept on working to achieve what we have today, which I'm very proud of. But I don't think it'd be this good without my three children by my side.

As a leader in manufacturing, what do you believe are the most significant changes you've witnessed over the years and how has your company adapted to stay ahead of industry trends?

One of the most dramatic changes I've witnessed in my career began when I started as a draftsman, meticulously creating drawings by hand. In those early days, purchasing agents would physically collect these drawings in person. I calculated equations with pen and paper to prepare quotes, then typed them up for hand-delivery to purchasing agents. By the 1980s, when our children joined the business, we had transitioned to fax machines. From there, the evolution accelerated rapidly — from fax to Internet, to sophisticated computer systems and automated machinery. What once took days or hours can now be accomplished in minutes. A single worker today, leveraging modern technology, can accomplish ten times what was possible in the past. The entire process — from design to quote to production — has been streamlined through digital transformation, dramatically increasing both efficiency and productivity.

What role has the MBA played in your company's growth and success?

The MBA has been an invaluable partner in our company's growth and success from day one.

Their comprehensive suite of services has supported every facet of our operation throughout our history. From essential workforce training and HR consulting to legal guidance and business advocacy, we've strategically utilized MBA's resources as an extension of our own capabilities.

What makes the MBA particularly valuable is their deep understanding of the regional business landscape and manufacturing sector. As our company has evolved, we've leveraged their expertise across multiple areas — professional development programs, compliance training, leadership seminars, and strategic networking events. Their ability to connect local businesses and foster collaboration has helped us build crucial relationships within the Erie business community.

Even today, the MBA remains our primary resource for staying competitive and informed. Whether we need guidance on regulatory changes, workforce development, or industry trends, their team consistently delivers practical solutions that drive our business forward. Having such a robust business association in our backyard has been a cornerstone of our continued growth and success.

What is your favorite memory from your time working with the MBA?

The anniversary event with Colin Powell

and Peter Fonda stands out as a particular highlight. Mr. Fonda's visit to ISM and his involvement with our motorcycle project created lasting memories.

We had a little luncheon over at one of the buildings, and he spent some time there and we also took him back to the airport in Cleveland. He was in a big hurry and ran into the airport, and we had to chase him because he left his wallet in the car. He was such a joy to be with, and we spent a lot of time, personal time with him, not only in the plant but when he rode the American Manufacturing Tribute Bike.

I also remember at one Annual Event, President George Bush Sr. needed a pen, and I handed it to him, and we got to talking about our good friend Arnold Palmer. A few days later, he sent a thank you for the pen that I still have to this day.

We have some great stories with past speakers — Newt Gingrich, Benjamin Netanyahu and Joe Paterno — all because of the MBA.

Looking forward, what are some of the key opportunities or innovations you're excited about in the manufacturing sector and how do you see ISM continuing to lead in the years ahead?

The most exciting opportunity lies in leveraging technology to empower our workforce to do more. By continuing to invest in cutting-edge solutions, we're positioning

ISM to maintain its leadership role in the manufacturing sector while enabling our team to achieve even greater levels of productivity and innovation.

To learn more, visit ismerie.com. ■



Manufacturer & Business Association

Did You Know?

- According to the 1905 Census of Manufacturers, which was the first dedicated federal census focused solely on manufacturing establishments operating under the "factory system," key statistics included: a significant portion of the workforce employed in manufacturing, a concentration in industries like textiles, iron and steel, and a growing trend towards mechanization, although detailed data on specific production figures might vary depending on the industry sector.
- According to available data, in 1905, the population of Erie, Pennsylvania was likely around 52,000 people, based on the trend of population growth in the early 20th century.

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