

Ohio Fuel Cell Coalition - Third Frontier Success Stories: Catacel

Brian Davis has a story that reads like a philosopher's theory on the concept of life coming full circle. Two decades after working for future Catacel Corporation president Bill Whittenberger, he is now employed with the Garrettsville-based catalyst solutions company as Quality Assurance Manager.

Growing up in Alliance, Brian spent his summers working at the tool and die plant owned by his father. He studied secondary education at Kent State for a time, but the engineering industry captured his interest and in 1987 Bill offered Brian a job at Camet Co., an emission control products company. It was at Camet that Brian developed a talent for quality assurance, transferring to the position midway through his tenure.

In 1993, Brian accepted a Quality Engineer position with the Parflex Division (Ravenna) of motion and control technology leader Parker Hannifin, and was eventually promoted to Supplier Quality Engineer. Despite 15 successful years, Brian found himself a victim of the difficult economic climate when, in 2008, Parflex imposed workforce reductions.

Fortunately, fate intervened when Brian ran into Catacel Plant Manager David Becker last summer, seven years after David had asked him if he knew of any employment opportunities. Ironically, it was now David who was in a position to help Brian. Brian was eager to jump on board after he explained that Catacel was seeking a Quality Assurance professional for a new project.

A recently awarded Ohio Third Frontier grant had helped Catacel fund the development of a new high-capacity machine that can quickly apply catalytic coatings to reactor inserts used in fuel cell applications. Catacel also received project management support from EMTEC (Dayton) in planning and coordinating the activities of personnel, equipment suppliers and a key customer.

Brian began working on the insert coater project in June 2009 and was offered a full-time position with Catacel in September. A typical day for Brian now includes coordinating activities with production staff, overseeing the transfer of parts to production, and planning for the company's pending ISO certification. His 20-plus years in the automobile industry and knack for resolving manufacturing issues have contributed to Catacel's recent success; the company completed fiscal 2009 with 45% overall job growth and a 50% increase in workspace.

"I love being on a team that thinks outside of the box. I think that 'green' energy is the future of the United States. This is the type of innovative technology America thrives on. I am excited to be a part of it," Brian says.