

# Subcontractors' expo is meeting an unfilled need

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"We'll take over all of Cobo," he said. "With 1,500 exhibitors, Coleman (Young) will have to expand Cobo over the river, after all." Joked Witherspoon's assistant, Larry Sedmak, a Troy resident who was an editor of trade publications for Hearst Publications before joining CMA.

CMA has grown to 25 full-time employees and includes a telephone hot line that matches manufacturers and suppliers by computer; CMA will also put on a show in Los Angeles in April and has held smaller shows in Houston and Orlando.

According to Witherspoon, there are 12,000 job shops in Michigan and 350,000 in the United States. "You see all these job shops along Nine Mile and Stephenson Highway and you wonder what the hell they do? It's the guys in Bloomfield Hills who own the job shops. They might only make hangers, but they make money making hangers than the president of General Motors."

JOHN DALE is a buyer for GM's Cadillac engine plant on Middlebelt in Livonia. He attended the show last year and is attending again this year. "I thought it was excellent. I go to find more suppliers and parts I can use. It gave me more to choose from. There are new suppliers out there who can make parts more competitively. It forces my regular suppliers to be more flexible. And your quality goes up, too."

Ron Gesquire is North American sales manager for Sach Automotive of Troy, a Tier 1 supplier for the Big

**'It forces my regular suppliers to be more flexible. And your quality goes up, too.'**

— John Dale  
GM buyer

Three that makes drive train components and suspensions.

He will attend his first show this year.

"Our biggest problem we're having is we're a German firm and we haven't found the quality we want without paying the high price," said Gesquire. Though Sachs has been in the area for 10 years, he said it is still in many respects the new kid on the block.

"I haven't been able to find anyone to make parts for less than what our own companies can make it for in Germany, which is hard to believe because the Japanese have found them. But when you're new, you pay; it takes a lot of negotiating to bring costs down."

"We want to establish more sources. Now, 80 percent of our components come from Germany and we want to do better than that. We want to stand alone from Germany is the next few years."

Bob Leidel owns two Plymouth firms, Galaxy Precision Machining Inc. and MRL Engineering Co. Inc., which make engine and drive train components for diesel engine manu-

facturers. He exhibited at two expos and while he didn't generate much business through contacts there, what he learned at the show may have turned his business around.

"We found out we were not really prepared for the business that was there," said Leidel. "We found out that the job shop today has to offer much more service and quality to the customer, no matter how small you are."

To do that, Leidel instituted what is known as Statistical Process Control, a way of measuring and improving quality control that is a must for smaller shops to woo major manufacturers or Tier 1 suppliers.

As a result, Leidel says "business has doubled and it's doubling again. I tell you one thing. If you're going to a (trade) show, you better get ready. Your shop has got to be ready. We weren't, but today our shop's prepared for anything."

Leidel will attend this year's show, but not as an exhibitor. "Things are going so well since he learned his lessons about properly competing in today's marketplace that doesn't need any more business."

## Lear Siegler division making 100 all-plastic racing seats

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all-plastic seat that can hold up to the rugged demands of a race car and which, at 14 pounds, weighs half what the conventional race-car seat weighs.

Lear Siegler Seating Corp., a divi-

sion of the automotive group, met the challenge, bonding inner and outer shells of vacuum-formed Noryl, a plastic manufactured by General Electric.

After the shells are bonded into a single bucket seat, the chair is covered with thick polyurethane foam and trim fabric.

According to Siegler, it is the first all-plastic seat in automotive use. Others use plastic externally with internal metal support.

The energy crisis of the Seventies began the push to lighter vehicles.

"All vehicles are seeing a higher preponderance of plastic (as) the

processing costs have been going down," said Kozlowski. "If you can meet the weight-strength criteria, plastic is the way to go. Metal meets the strength criteria very well, but not the weight."

Kozlowski said it would be "three or four years down the road" before the Corvette seat would translate into consumer products or applications.

He said that no decision had been made yet whether Lear Siegler would be involved with the Challenge Series next year. "This is our first year, and we've been very satisfied," he said.

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