

Catching the wave

Motion Control opens a new facility in Farmington Hills

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If your car has a transmission, chances are you owe its reliability - at least in part - to Farm-

ington Hills-based Motion Control Corporation.

Setting more than 25 years of progress into a now 66,000-square-foot building, Motion Control caught the wave of improved technology in the automotive industry in 1973. Since then, company President Russell Quaine said, the business has grown significantly every year.

"What our company is doing is working with major suppliers and providing the auto industry a major resource to make sure their products are properly applied and sized," Quaine explained.

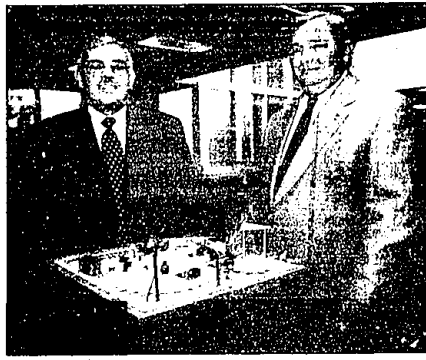
"Our particular expertise is on the testing side," said Vice President Paul Karty. Motion Control devices are used to ensure automobile transmissions, engine parts and entire power trains meet manufacturers' specifications.

The company's growth has mirrored that of the auto industry. However, it has also become more centered around technology, Quaine said. So much so that Motion Control was invited to participate in Oakland County's effort to attract more high tech businesses and employees, a project called "Automation Alley."

It's a long way from where the company started, but not yet close to where it will be in another 25 years, Karty speculates.

Founded in 1973 by Quaine and the owners of two other companies, Motion Control has grown to become a leader in its highly specialized field, Karty said. In the beginning, the company provided motors that could be started and stopped, moved slower or faster, depending on the needs of any given assembly line.

"Since that time, the degree of control of robotic controls has become very sophisticated,"



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRESLER

Automation: Motion Control vice president Paul B. Karty and Russell Quaine, president, use a display that illustrates some of their products.

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*Russell Quaine
—Motion Control president*

Quaine said.

That's evident in the clean, spacious environment inside the plant, which opened in November on Commerce Drive. Work stations consist of complex electronic devices in various stages of completion.

In addition to building systems, Motion Control provides a high level of service. Engineers

and technicians go out to the customer's facility to help them get up and running, or troubleshooting when the equipment isn't working right.

As the automobile industry has grown, so has the company, which serves customers in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana. Because auto makers often use overseas suppliers, Motion Control also has global connections.

To keep up with that economy, the new facility accommodates an increased reliance on electronic mail and the internet, Karty said.

If Motion Control has one problem, it's finding enough qualified employees. There's a shortage industry wide, Quaine

said. One of the reasons he got involved in Automation Alley, and serves on its board of directors, is to make Oakland County a magnet for talent.

"What (county executive) Brooks (Patterson) is trying to do is create an atmosphere for the county that is different from what people down in Texas or other places may think it is," Quaine said. "We need to attract technical people to maintain growth. There's a substantial need for engineering employees."

Having a successful Hills company expand within the community, while participating in the high tech consortium, benefits the city as well, according to city manager Steve Brock.

"It really is a boon to us," he said. "It provides a real core of high tech businesses. It's a valuable resource not only in terms of tax base, but who it draws to the community."

Brock said the city has worked to nurture the growth of its industrial base, because those companies help pay the freight for schools and city services, easing the burden on residential property owners. In turn, the companies realize the benefit of a strong, safe community and good schools, which will produce those high tech employees of the future.

Those intangible values are why Hills officials have serious concerns about granting abatements or other financial benefits to lure new construction.

"We think having a good community in which to locate yourself is incentive enough," Brock said.

The folks at Motion Control seem to agree, as evidenced by their willingness to invest for the company's future in Farmington Hills. The land on which their new facility stands was purchased five years ago, and if the company expands again, Karty said it's likely they'll stay right here.

For now, though, they'll be growing into the new shop.

"Is it the end of what the size of the company will be?" Karty speculated. "No. Once we optimize this facility, we'll have to look at a new one."

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The Farmington Observer

A HomeTown Communications Network™ publication
33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335
(On the southwest corner of Grand River and Farmington Rds.)

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