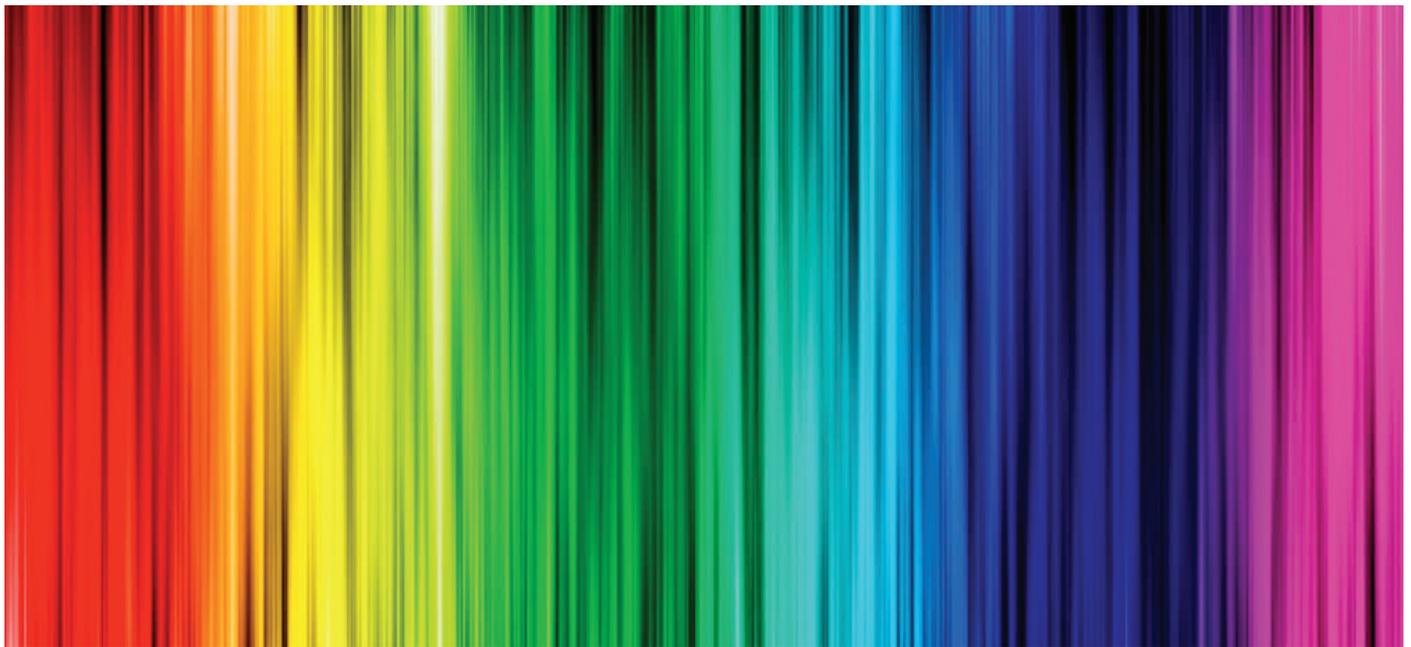


Keep competitive, stay in business



Unicote Corporation is one of the Western United States' leading powder coating sources, specializing in providing quality paint work for automotive, RV, construction, recreational and consumer goods.

In the 30 years since its establishment, Unicote Corporation has built up an honoured reputation among the many industries it serves. The company's strength is largely due to its unique processing capabilities and its ability and willingness to conform to various different industry standards.

Based in Michigan, Unicote Corporation operates a 35,000 square foot facility including two production shifts on three fully automated powder lines. All lines are capable of processing parts of various configurations and sizes simultaneously, and all products are certified to ensure they meet the required specifications.

As part of the automotive industry,

Unicote Corporation has a regional requirement of ISO 9001 in conjunction with the certification ISO/ TS 16949, specifically designed to aid companies servicing automotive-related products. The company chose IMSM as a consultant to walk them through the certification process.

Quality Manager Ron Mattice comments, "It wasn't that hard to implement the requirements because I'd been through other similar processes with other certifications. IMSM was good to go with, easy to work with and everything went well."

Ron believes that the company's ISO certificate has definitely improved internal processes: "internally, it

has made a noticeable difference, streamlining the activities of individuals in separate departments and helping them to gel together." He comments that the qualification has also helped the company to organise its forms and to improve the management processes of both people and production.

For Unicote Corporation, like every automotive-related industry in the region, acquiring TS 16949 was a must. Ron says making the qualification a requirement "puts every painter at the same level". He notes that it has made a significant difference to the organization of the company's processes and the quality of its end products.

Because of the standards, Ron believes that the company is more successful in delivering a high level of customer satisfaction. "It keeps us competitive and enables us to stay in the business."

Remain on industry "bid list"

Sterling Technologies specializes in making a variety of rotational-moulded plastic goods. It strives to create dynamic products that stand out in a crowded marketplace.

Sterling Technologies occupies a very specific niche, focusing on services for the automotive industry. The company is now a major player in serving electronics and electrical systems for many of the large automotive industry companies such as General Motors, Ford and Caterpillar.

"The whole procedure went relatively smoothly and only took about 6 months from start to finish"

Brad Salter, General Manager, explains that the company originally pursued the certification because General Motors made it a requirement of companies wishing to remain on the industry "bid list". At that time, Sterling Technologies used IMSM to assist them through the certification process so that they would remain a serious contender.

Remembering back to the certification process, Brad recalls that it was a huge undertaking, encompassing every aspect of business, but that it was not overwhelming: "I was impressed that it was neither overly complex or overly simplistic." IMSM helped the company to implement the correct documentation processes that were missing.

From an internal perspective, Brad said compliance to the TS 16949 standard increases discipline, formalizing and improving the procedures already in place. The standard has enhanced Sterling Technologies' ability to achieve its aims and remain true to its core values, which include a positive working environment, excellence and continuous improvement. Brad believes that compliance demonstrates to customers that the company is committed to maintaining the highest possible standards.

Keeping ahead of the game

MTM Industrial is a contract machining service to companies that purchase manufactured automotive parts from other sources. Focusing on custom machining in both the prototype and production industries, its services include statistical process control and Kanban deliveries.

MTM Industrial's commitment to quality and efficiency supported its decision to pursue the ISO 9001, which it has already achieved, as well as industry-specific TS 16949.

Ryan Kelly, Office Manager, says "Although obtaining the certification was a little more complicated than we had anticipated, it has not been anything we haven't been able to handle." he comments that IMSM has really helped employees to "maintain a quality structure."



Ryan believes one of the biggest benefits of both the ISO 9001 and the TS 16949 certifications is the internal changes they initiate, helping to provide better documented and more clearly defined systems, more of a customer focus, and procedures that encourage employees to define targets and measure performance.

From a marketing perspective, Ryan is sure that the ISO certification keeps MTM Industrial in the game and helps it to remain an industry leader. He thinks that the TS certification will definitely enhance the company's competitive edge more so than if it only held the single ISO 9001 certification.

ISO/TS 16946 Automotive

When it comes to automotive production, world-class quality, productivity and continued improvement are absolute requirements. ISO/TS 16949 is designed to help companies to implement effective and robust systems relating to the design, development, production, installation and servicing of all automotive related products.

Relevant to every kind of automotive supplier around the world from small manufacturers to multi-site multinational companies, ISO/TS

16949 is a mandatory requirement for all leading vehicle manufacturers. If your automotive production company wants to increase its competitiveness in a global market, gaining this certification offers you the competitive edge.

- Improves product and process quality, reducing overheads, waste and error
- Increases on-time delivery
- Ensures absolute consistency throughout the supply chain
- Satisfies automotive mandates of International Automotive Task Force (IATF) members around the world