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PROTOTYPE FOR GROWTH: New Magnus Precision president excited about new department's potential

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PHELPS — Grant Oberdorf, the new president of Magnus Precision Manufacturing, moved to Florida about three years ago and considered giving retirement a try.

"I was down there for about a month," Oberdorf said Thursday. "I was bored stiff because I had always worked, worked, worked."

Oberdorf returned to New York, put out feelers and lunched with Don Miller, Magnus' director of business development, whom he has known for decades. He was hired as Magnus' plant manager and soon named operations manager.

Now, he's applying his work ethic to the whole company — a business that he says is considered the go-to place by customers in the aerospace, optics and medical industries with tough machining problems.

"We do the most difficult-to-manufacture products," Oberdorf said. "When other companies won't do it or won't quote it, Magnus does the job."

Oberdorf, who grew up in the area and lives in Canandaigua, has more than four decades of manufacturing experience. He replaced Tom Shepherd as company president. The latter was promoted to chief operating officer of Floturn, the Ohio-based company that bought Magnus in 2000.



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Magnus Precision Manufacturing

Grant Oberdorf (left), the new president of Magnus Precision Manufacturing, sits with Don Miller, director of business development, at the company's headquarters in Phelps



Spencer Tulis photos / Finger Lakes Times

Magnus Precision Manufacturing

Grant Oberdorf is the new president of Magnus Precision Manufacturing in Phelps.



Spencer Tulis / Finger Lakes Times

Magnus Precision Manufacturing

Magnus Precision Manufacturing caters to customers in the aerospace, optics and medical industries, specializing in difficult-to-manufacture products. The business, at 1912 Route 96, employs about 75 people.

Oberdorf's promotion coincides with a period of growth at Magnus. The company recently bought the assets of a Rochester business and used them to create a prototyping department. In recent months, it has hired 10 to 12 people, mainly highly trained machinists, programmers and engineers, in part to staff that department.

The prototyping department opened about a week ago.

"That's really exciting for Magnus as far as our future growth," Miller said.

The company hopes current and future customers will take advantage of the prototyping service and then retain Magnus for larger orders down the road.

"A lot of our customers are really requesting a lot of prototyping," Oberdorf said. "It was an area we had a lot of interest in, and we felt compelled to service that area."

He said Magnus' experience will help set the new department apart. The company's engineers and machinists can work with customers to give them the exact product they want, he said.

He thinks Magnus also has another advantage.

"What's different about our prototyping department is some of the equipment that's in there," he said. "It's some of the finest equipment in the business."

Magnus' stable of high-tech machines helped draw Oberdorf to the company in the first place. He said Magnus runs a clean, state-of-the-art facility.

Oberdorf also praised the atmosphere at Magnus.

"We're 100 percent employee owned, and that is huge," he said. "There's a different mindset when you're an owner. You take pride, and you care about what happens."

Oberdorf and Miller both see room for more growth ahead, especially in the optics sector of the business. They hope to capitalize on their proximity to Rochester, one of the nation's major optics hubs.

Last year, optics accounted for about 25 percent of Magnus' business. The company's products include high-precision optical barrels with multiple layers of glass lenses. They are used in Lasik eye surgeries. Other Magnus products go into night vision goggles.