



ELECTRONIC MFG. SERVICES (EMS)

At Gowanda: Production Cells and Made-to-Order Machinery

Gowanda, NY — Hidden in this sleepy town of 3,500 people in the foothills of the Northern Allegheny Mountains is the home of a sophisticated high-tech facility started by a few people who already lived there and wanted to create employment opportunity near home. Gowanda Electronics is atypical today; with the majority of its product offering still made in-house in the U.S.A., and the company has added some special twists of its own.

Centralized production cells of 2 to 4 workers are part of the “secret” of successfully manufacturing Surface Mount and Self Leaded MIL-grade inductors, toroidal inductors as well as Power and RF Transformers for the Military, Medical and High End Industrial Markets, according to Chief Operating Officer Claude Badawy. This cell approach maximizes efficiency, minimizes handling and minimizes the travel of the product “Keeping everything organized in a very localized area,” he explained.

“Typically, an inductor is wound, soldered, encapsulated, formed, tested and taped all within this 5-to-9-foot area.” This way, he said, the feedback loop is very short. One of the operators may notice something wrong, and working literally at arm’s length from the other operator(s) in the cell, can point it out and have the problem corrected immediately. “This way we get the feedback after two parts, rather than after a thousand have been made,” Badawy said.

This method means that at the end of the work day, work in progress is kept to a minimum; instead there are fin-

ished parts, ready for testing, packaging and shipping at the customer’s request.

Another key part of the company’s success formula is building its own production equipment. Most of it is built in-house — and it is very specific to the product that it is being used to build. “You can’t just go out to a supplier and buy this type of equipment,” Badawy said.



Production worker Mary Braymiller uses special equipment to wind toroids.

This specialized hardware is engineered and constructed in a separate facility — also in Gowanda. Designated the “Tech Center”, it is staffed by machinists, electronic technicians, programmers, and a manager. “We keep them busy more than all of the time,” Badawy continued, “so they couldn’t contract out even if we wanted them to. They design and build equipment that is very unique to meet our customers’ exacting needs.”

“A customer may come in,” Badawy explains, “with very specific requirements. We can’t just go to an inductor supply store to buy equipment geared for those requirements. So we build the equipment at the Tech Center. All of our surface mount and axial leaded products are 100 percent tested — many of them automatically — before they go out the door.” And the company counts on its specialized home-grown equipment, controlled processes, and trained employees to provide the kind of control the customer requires.

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