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Marlin Steel Wire brings it home

[MARY GLINDINNING](#)

Drew Greenblatt gets a big kick out of the image of a worker in Taiwan opening a box stamped “Made in America.” “How cool is that?” said the [owner and president of Marlin Steel Wire Products](#), a Baltimore, Md., manufacturer of [wire baskets](#), [shelves](#), [wire forms](#) and [hooks](#). “Exports are saving our bacon. They are growing rapidly. Ninety-five percent of the world’s population lives outside the USA. We should aggressively sell to them so we can grow.”

[About a fourth of Marlin’s sales are exports](#), and that percentage is increasing. Greenblatt sees his company as one of a new generation of American manufacturers.

“We are growing because we are focused on three things: custom engineering (4 design engineers provide innovative material handling designs); fast delivery – days vs. months; and quality – [tight tolerance with great robots](#) and talented people setting them up,” Greenblatt said.

To compete globally, innovation is required. Marlin Wire already has 12 robots and is getting ready to buy two more.

“When I bought Marlin Steel Wire in 1998, our newest piece of equipment was from the 1950s. My team was saddled with antiquated equipment so it was hard to make baskets fast. We generated a tremendous amount of scrap because we could not hold tolerances that would satisfy the client,” he said.

“Investing back into the plant was critical. Now the robots are having a big impact because my talented crew runs \$2 million of equipment that is very productive, because these robots supercharge how many baskets and wire forms our employees can make in an hour and because we get so few quality rejects,” Greenblatt said.

And they can ship faster, so they win more jobs. The company grew from 24 to 30 employees last year, and Greenblatt expects more hiring. “We are 5 times bigger than in 1998 when I bought the company,” he said.

Founded in 1968, Marlin Steel Wire was a Brooklyn, N.Y., – based company that made baskets for bagel makers. When the Chinese started selling baskets cheaper than Marlin could buy the steel to make them, it was either change or die. Now, more than 70 percent of Marlin’s sales are to the material handling industry. It makes baskets that hold parts that go down conveyor belts or assembly lines.

“Manufacturing engineers are challenged by plant managers to improve the flow of their factory so there is less work in process and fewer parts that need to be reworked due to damage on the production line,” he said. “Our company’s baskets pay for themselves in months because of direct labor savings, scrap reduction and improved cash flow by having less work-in-process.”

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