

BANGOR DAILY NEWS

Bowdoin manufacturer honored with award for innovation, global leadership

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BOWDOIN, Maine — A manufacturing company in this town was honored Wednesday for a commitment to innovation that has led to it becoming a global leader in the manufacture of equipment and precision instruments for the neuroscience community.

At an award ceremony held at the company's headquarters in Bowdoin, the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership named [FHC Inc.](#) as the 2012 Manufacturer of the Year. Maine MEP's annual award is given to a Maine company that demonstrates outstanding vision, leadership and manufacturing excellence, according to a media release.

"In honoring FHC as the 2012 Maine Manufacturer of the Year, we celebrate a company that recognizes the key elements of success in a competitive global economy," Bruce Pulkkinen, chairman of Maine MEP, said in a statement.

Pulkkinen lauded FHC for embracing the following four strategies:

1. Focusing on innovation as a central business strategy and creating an Innovation Center that partners with customers to anticipate and solve their needs.
2. Investing in its workforce by training employees in advanced innovation techniques and creating a Great Ideas Group that challenges team members to find new solutions.
3. Continuously improving their operations by applying lean manufacturing techniques.
4. Targeting global markets for its products, opening offices in Europe and South America, while looking to expand in Asia.

"This combination of internal and external strategies exemplifies what it means to become a next generation manufacturer," Pulkkinen said.

FHC was founded in 1970 and has become a major player in the neuroscience community. The company's clients include scientists and clinicians studying at major universities, medical schools, research hospitals, government research institutions and private laboratories located at pharmaceutical, biotechnology and technology-based companies around the world.

Maine MEP, part of a national network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to small manufacturers, has worked with FHC over the past two years to provide lean manufacturing consulting and management coaching in innovation engineering, the systematic approach to innovation taught at the University of Maine's [Foster Center for Student Innovation](#).

"Every manufacturer recognizes that innovation is the key to long-term success, but many companies find it one of the most challenging goals to attain," said George Gervais, commissioner of the Maine Department of Community and Economic Development. "FHC has distinguished itself by the way in which it has institutionalized the processes for generating new ideas and rapidly testing them for commercial success."

Gervais said the company's application of the principles of Innovation Engineering has enabled a Maine company with 100 employees "to achieve an international reputation in its field."

Keri Seitz, FHC's CEO, said she was honored by the award and that it was a testament to the company's employees and culture of innovation.

"With our guiding principle of innovation through collaboration, we are humbled to work with our customers to provide pioneering solutions for neuroscientists and neurosurgeons worldwide," Seitz said in a statement. "This award is testimony that Maine firms can compete with the best in the world."

The award coincides with October's designation as Manufacturing Month to highlight the importance of manufacturing in the U.S. economy.

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