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## Punching in

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**Workforce management provider Control Module, Inc. uses lean manufacturing and strategic partnerships as part of an aggressive growth plan. Linda Seid Frembes finds out more**

The concept of the punch clock has changed over the years. As technology has infiltrated the workplace, paper time cards that are manually punched have given way to a myriad of paperless options like swipe cards and biometric readers. Control Module, Inc. (CMI) of Enfield, CT, is the

leading workforce management provider, offering technology solutions for the secure automation of time and attendance and access control. Customers like Burlington Coat Factory, Continental Airlines, and United Rentals are using the company's products for time and attendance tracking, inventory control, work in process management, and access control via a product line that includes biometric solutions like its BioScan Express, TouchTime, and Genus lines of biometric terminals.

Since its founding in 1969, CMI has enjoyed continuous financial growth, a strong history of technology innovation, and an impressive customer base, including 160 of the Fortune 500, as well as small-to-medium sized enterprises in the retail, manufacturing, and transportation industries. "Companies were hearing about CMI by word of mouth," says Jana Moak, president and CEO of CMI, who has been with the company for the past two years. "We have a reputation for quick-turn customer solutions."

CMI's operations are housed in a 35,000-square-foot facility, a former school building with individual rooms that are approximately 900 square feet each. Each room is a cell in the company's cellular manufacturing operations. "The manufacturing processes are in a typical U-shaped layout," explains John Fahy, vice president of operations for CMI, who has been with the company for 26 years. "This is a good space and location for us. All equipment in each room is completely mobile so we can change cells quickly if necessary."

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Some processes are subcontracted to outside vendors, 95 percent of whom are located within 25 miles of the plant. The company also has approximately 12 key suppliers, some that have been with the company for 25-plus years. CMI's MRP system (MISYS) is an off-the-shelf system, while its biometric labor management system was developed in-house utilizing CMI's biometric terminals.

"There is a big emphasis on training and continuous improvement here," says Fahy. Employees of the ISO 9001:2000 certified company are trained on new products as soon as they are released by the engineering group. This ensures thorough and intimate knowledge and understanding of each product by every employee.

Four years ago, the company was nearing its 30-year mark and wanted a strategic plan for growth. Although growth had not been an issue to date, CMI management felt they needed to better maximize output for its current operations.

CMI brought in a consulting firm who introduced the company to several different growth engines, including lean manufacturing. Fahy adds: "The lean process introduced metrics that we hadn't kept track of before now. Today, we use these metrics in monthly operating reviews where we report performance against targeted benchmarks."

Also as part of a continuous improvement and cost reduction initiative, a paperless documentation system was introduced in manufacturing. Fahy explains: "There used to be racks and racks of folders for design documents. Now everything is electronic and there can be more than one party using a design document. The new system reduces errors and increases efficiency."

The paperless evolution has also reached administrative tasks. Purchase orders are received by electronic fax and are e-mailed to the appropriate people.

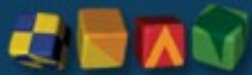
"CMI's history shows that we are leaders in our industry. We were the first to introduce biometrics in the workforce management industry and one of the only companies in our field to have ISO 9001:2000 certification," says Moak. "We want to grow, but in an orderly way. The growth plan is aggressive expanding into new verticals, geographies, and the government sector.

CMI's goal is to provide the best hardware coupled with leading strategic partners. CMI continues to add partners to expand its markets. For example, CMI recently announced a partnership with GHG Corporation, of Houston, TX, a leading supplier of workforce management solutions to the public sector. By combining CMI's hardware with GHG's software, GHG has the ability to provide full solutions to its federal and

municipal, as well as private sector customers.

As CMI moves forward, it will face certain marketplace issues like technology price drops and the commoditizing of products. In order to combat that, CMI and its partners will work to add value for its customers. "Today's workforce includes professionals as well as blue collar workers. It all boils down to how companies want to collect and utilize data," says Moak. "The future is beyond a time clock that is hanging on the wall. The future is effective optimization of your workforce."

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