



## PROFILE

**Xact Wire EDM Corp.**  
**www.xactedm.com**  
**Sales** \$5 million to \$10 million  
**Headquarters** Waukesha, Wis.  
**Employees** 60  
**Service** Electrical-discharge machining  
**Jeff Gubbins, co-owner** "They have the peace of mind that we only do EDM."

Partial view of Xact's 15,000 square foot climate controlled Wisconsin facility.

EDM. If we need something else, we go to the experts. We're a very good fit for shops that have a some EDM capacity but need our help from time to time, so they will come to us with large projects or really challenging parts. They can come to us with confidence because we are not a threat to them. We want to partner with them as an extension of their own capabilities and not be competition.

"If they go to another shop, they might be sending the work to a competitor. With us, they have the peace of mind that we only do EDM in our shop."

Gubbins and his partner, John Dora, worked together at a job shop for five years before opening Xact in Waukesha, Wis., in 1984 to focus on EDM machining. Today, the company operates out of 15,000 square feet in Waukesha and an additional 5,000-square-foot facility in Cary, Ill.

EDM is a machining method used to cut conductive materials with a thin wire electrode, usually .004 to .012-inch diameter, which follows a programmed path. Xact can machine pieces up to 16 inches thick, cut taper angles to more than 30 degrees, and hold tolerances down to one ten-thousandth of an inch.

Xact serves medical, consumer products, electronics, packaging and automotive clients. The job shop works with machined parts, stamping dies, trim dies, mold components and electrodes, extru-

## MASTER OF WIRE EDM

Many job shops have numerous machining capabilities, but Xact Wire EDM Corp. of Waukesha, Wis., prefers to be the best at only one.

by Brian Salgado

**X**act Wire EDM Corp. has seen its electrical-discharge machining (EDM) job shop peers add all sorts of machining capabilities over the years in an attempt to become one-stop machine shops for customers. But Xact has remained focused on wire EDM throughout its 23-year history, and co-owner Jeff Gubbins says that is his company's unique strength.

"Many EDM job shops end up being a jack of all trades, so they will do milling and grinding, water jet, etc.," Gubbins adds. "But we've stayed uniquely focused on

sion dies, gauges and fixtures, prototypes, exotic materials and form tools.

### INVESTING IN NEW EQUIPMENT

After sticking with the same brand of EDM equipment for more than 20 years, Xact recently invested in seven new Sodick machines to improve its productivity. Gubbins says that along with being faster and requiring less maintenance, the Sodick machines have linear motors, a relatively new technology, that will never wear. This positioning method is also "incredibly" accurate, quiet, fast, vibration free, and requires no maintenance. They have an indefinite life expectancy which allows Sodick to offer a 10-year machine positioning guaranty on their equipment. "This allows us to be more competitive because the level of automation is better and machine up time is greater," Gubbins adds. "The threading is more reliable and maintenance-free. The acquisition cost of the equipment is also less."

Xact also recently shifted to computer-assisted design and computer-aided man-

ufacture (CAD/CAM) software called PEPS through Camtek. This helps the company read and translate its customers' CAD files more thoroughly and reliably, eliminating many questions on the front-end of jobs, according to Gubbins. The software's use of knowledge-based machining has also saved a lot of programming time.

### MOVING INTO MEDICAL

Gubbins says that with globalization, more potential customers are using overseas machine shops for their products that tolerate longer lead times and less intellectual property protection. This trend convinced Xact to focus on the medical device sector in 1999, and Gubbins says the company was ahead of the curve in this market as more machine shops are pursuing these clients today. "This work requires more confidentiality because these companies want to protect their new product ideas, and speed to market is important," Gubbins says. "They also obviously need to know that critical medical components are to spec when they get

them in."


When Xact pursued these customers, it added more sophisticated inspection systems and the capabilities to cut smaller wire diameters. "Now, many of our machines are running wire diameters of between four-thousandths and six-thousandths of an inch, and it requires good machines and experienced operators to do that efficiently," he says. "And the OGP video systems reliably speed the inspection process."

### CLOSE-KNIT COMPANY

Gubbins says the employees at Xact enjoy a close-knit atmosphere that produces long-term retention of quality people. "We have a lot of guys who are friends outside of work," Gubbins says. "Having these strong relationships help when the pressure is on at work."

To nurture this culture, Gubbins says Xact tries to promote from within the company. For instance, Jason Mueller, a longtime machine operator, was promoted to manager of the Cary location. *usur*

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**Devin Wendorf**  
Programming Dept Supervisor  
Xact Wire EDM Corp.

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