

Whitcraft Acquires Reliable Manufacturing

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Whitcraft LLC, based in this Eastford facility, acquired Reliable Manufacturing in Bloomfield last week. It was the third acquisition since 2004 for the aerospace components manufacturer.

Aerospace components

manufacturer Whitcraft LLC said last week it would acquire Bloomfield-based Reliable Manufacturing, its third major acquisition in four years.

The Eastford-based company said the latest deal will boost its growing kitting business and expand its precision manufacturing base.

The 50-year-old Reliable Manufacturing, a 50-employee supplier of precision-machined aircraft components with a specialty in engines, is the third major acquisition in four years for Whitcraft, which also bought Plainville-based Connecticut Tool and Manufacturing in 2004 and Shelton-based A.O. Sherman Company in 2006.

The purchase price for Reliable Manufacturing was not disclosed.

Whitcraft chief executive officer Colin Cooper said Reliable Manufacturing was attractive to his company because of its capability to manufacture nickel and

titanium alloys, all new markets for Whitcraft. Its Plainville operation does precision manufacturing, but predominately deals with carburized steel.

“They really give us a critical mass and core competency in precision machinery of aerospace components,” Cooper said.

Reliable Manufacturing strengthens Whitcraft’s offerings with existing customers General Electric and Honeywell, Cooper added.

Major Customers

The acquisition also provides greater opportunities in kitting – individual items packaged together to be sold as a group – a segment that has grown to 10 percent of the company’s business after starting up five years ago. Whitcraft, which recorded \$90 million in revenue last year, provides kits to Pratt & Whitney and Sikorsky.

Cooper explained companies like to have the option of buying multiple parts together instead of individually choosing from Whitcraft’s hundreds of product offerings.

“If you go into surgery, the instruments are laid out there for the surgeon on the table,” Cooper said. “That’s what we are doing for the customers.”

Cooper said he believes the latest acquisition will give Whitcraft a better standing with aerospace industry original equipment manufacturers, which, much like the auto industry, relies heavily on suppliers.

Steady Growth

“We’re positioning ourselves to help support the manufacturers to have one family of suppliers to supply a larger percent of content,” Cooper said.

Since acquiring Connecticut Tool and Manufacturing, Whitcraft has grown that business from \$9.5 million in revenue to \$20 million while also doubling the size of manufacturing space by adding 11,000 square feet to the facility.

After acquiring A.O. Sherman, Whitcraft moved the company from four buildings in Norwalk to one in Shelton and increased revenue from \$6 million to \$13 million.

Cooper said the acquisition of Reliable Manufacturing adds to the company's goal to balance military and civilian work.

"Historically, aerospace has been a cyclical business," he said. "We like to have some balance between the two because they tend not to cycle together."