

# Tiny Datum receives key quality certification

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SANTA ROSA -- Datum Technologies passed another milestone last week. After a year of careful documentation and other qualifying measures the precision machine shop received its AS9100C quality-control certification for aerospace manufacturing.

"It was grueling," said Datum president and co-founder Richard Hunt. His wife, company chief executive officer and co-founder Analisa Hunt, did most of the work, he said.

The certification comes about a year and a half after the Santa Rosa-based company received the coveted ISO certification, allowing it to work for many government and defense suppliers, but not at the level Datum has achieved with the new certificate. The AS9100 standard incorporates and expands upon the ISO 9001 standard.

"This is a relatively new process required just within the last couple of years," said Mr. Hunt. "The first question we've been getting from aerospace giants like Lockheed and Northrop Grumman has been, 'Are you AS9100C yet?' If you're not they don't want to talk with you. Now that we are, we can continue the conversation."

At only nine employees, Datum Tech (707-738-3914, datumtechcnc.com) is the one of the smallest companies to hold the qualification, and only the second manufacturer in Sonoma County to have it. Petaluma-based Donal Machine, with five times the staff, is also AS9100-certified.

In anticipation of new aerospace contracts, Datum has built a new quality-assurance lab at its expanded facility on O'Hair Court. The company also invested \$250,000 in a brand new five-axis milling machine, soon to be delivered.

"We'll be growing our workforce as we go," said Mr. Hunt.

The certification was obtained with the help of ISO Cert Solutions of Petaluma. The process, undertaken at the urging of local manufacturing alliance 101MFG, was partly in response to the hit the Hunts' previous company, Aspen Precision, took when Agilent sent its manufacturing operations overseas.

The loss of contracts plus a sour economy forced Aspen, a maker of components for test and measurement systems, to close down in 2002. But the Hunts opened Datum soon afterwards.

"We realized that Datum would need to diversify its client base if it was going to survive," said Mr. Hunt.

That meant machining more and more complex components for systems builders like General Dynamics' Healdsburg facility, which builds high-power electromagnetic motors used in missiles, and Sacramento-based Aerojet, a builder of rocket engines.

"We make components for the semiconductor industry, medical device makers and now flight components for aerospace," said Mr. Hunt. "Successful precision manufacturers air for a moving target. You have to stay flexible and ready always to move in new directions."

Datum was a recipient of a Business Journal Top Manufacturers Award in 2011.

Correction, June 11, 2013: Datum Technologies built a new quality-assurance laboratory and installed a five-axis milling machine. The original story had incorrect information.