

From the Dayton Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/dayton/print-edition/2011/01/07/aviation-parts-maker-re-energized.html>

# Aviation parts maker re-energized

## Pitco came close to closing in 2009

Premium content from Dayton Business Journal by Joe Cogliano , DBJ Staff Reporter

Date: Friday, January 7, 2011, 6:00am EST

Several times in 2009, **Geoff Hoefflin** was inclined to shut the doors at Pitco Aerospace Inc.

Pitco's general manager and partner was frustrated as orders at the Dayton-based aviation parts maker had fallen dramatically and no rebound was in sight.

The company had trimmed its ranks to two shop workers, plus Hoefflin and owner and president **Ralph Pippenger** still had big payments to make on equipment.

It was teetering on the brink.

More than 50 years old, Pitco manufactures aircraft spinners shells and components, those metal cones and other parts that keep propellers attached to planes and helicopters.

To turn things around, Hoefflin and Pippenger brought in industry veteran **Gary Burdette** last year and started going after military work. Six months later, Pitco is on the rebound. The company is up to eight employees and has its biggest backlog in more than two years.

Pitco's rebound has been a result of diversifying into new markets and changing the way it approaches its relationships with clients. After dropping to less than \$1 million in revenue, Burdette expects the company to double revenue in 2011, surpassing its best year by this summer, and looks to add up to five more employees to meet demand.

"It took a lot of time and hard work, but we're getting there," Hoefflin said. "2011 looks to be a great year."

## A new direction

When Burdette arrived at Pitco as the engineering and quality manager, the company catered exclusively to the general aviation industry, which sells planes for personal and business use. **Cessna Aircraft Co.** was one of its largest customers.

However, general aviation had taken a steep dive.

Burdette convinced Hoefflin and Pippenger that with his connections — and a change in approach — the company could break into the military market. The duo gave Burdette a part-time gig, with the promise of a full-time job for bringing in new work.

In recent months, Pitco picked up several contracts with Tier I and Tier II military suppliers, including the largest spinner the company has ever done. The work spans everything from unmanned aircraft to sub-assemblies in radiator cooling systems for helicopters.

“It seems like the bigger the part that you go to, and the tougher the part is to build, you start eliminating your competition pretty quick,” Burdette said.

Pitco also changed the way it relates to customers.

Instead of building parts based on customer plans, the traditional way of doing business in its industry, the company is reaching out to work with customers during the engineering and design phase. This helped sell customers on its metal spinning process, which can be relatively inexpensive but tough to design.

While Pitco’s recovery is still a work in progress, the future seems bright.

“In order for this company to survive, it had to go after new business. There was no option,” Burdette said. “Now things are looking up.”