

Family Business

*“I love my company.
That’s what makes me
successful in my job today.
I love everything we do
and I believe in what
we do, and it comes off
as genuine because
it is genuine.”*





Turning up the heat on innovation

Award winner **Trisha D. Lemery**

President & CEO

Winsert, Inc.

Marinette, WI

Founded: 1977

A love of manufacturing — and the family business — inspires Trisha Lemery to accelerate growth at Winsert.

Most teenagers zone out when their parents talk about work, but Trisha Lemery zoned in. The more she learned, the more she wanted to know about Winsert, Inc., the company her father, Stephen Dickinson, founded in 1977. Before long Lemery was regularly talking shop with her dad, frequently hashing out Winsert's business challenges and opportunities.

With the intent to pursue other endeavors, Lemery moved out of state after college. But she missed being involved at Winsert, a manufacturer of wear- and heat-resistant alloy components for heavy-duty engines. Lemery asked her dad to hire her for any job, even if it meant working in the foundry as she had in high school and college.

Lemery first guided Winsert through achieving ISO certification, a program that assures international quality standards. During the next 15 years, she moved into positions of increasing responsibility. As her father prepared to retire, Lemery participated in four years of rigorous succession planning to prepare for her biggest role yet.

She became Winsert's President & CEO in 2008.

"What really intrigued me was the untapped market potential for our innovative alloys. We could capture market segments where no one had gone before," she explains. "I could see the vision and our competency, and I knew how to get us there."

But before she could execute that vision, Lemery had a global recession to contend with. Sales dropped 67%, prompting Lemery to travel extensively to meet with customers and prospects. She pitched clients on Winsert becoming their R&D arm to help them solve problems, improve their products and reduce costs.

A "no" never really meant "no" to Lemery, and she would pursue the work — armed with deep technical know-how — until she won the business. "I love a challenge, and I'm very, very competitive," she says. "We started growing organically and added new customers as a result of our new technology and teamwork."

Lemery's efforts shaped Winsert into an industry expert with a diverse array of alloy solutions for numerous industries. Some of the clients captured due to her efforts now rank among the company's largest. ►



“I want employees to come to work and love their jobs, to be involved and contribute to the success of the company, to have a feeling of community.”

► To spur strong growth, Lemery recruited and retained key scientific experts and emphasized investing in research and development. She also championed acquisitions and flexed Winsert’s entrepreneurial prowess by expanding several product lines.

Winsert began as a manufacturer of alloy valve seats for heavy-duty engines. After the company made technological advancements in its alloys, Lemery guided Winsert to apply those innovations to developing new products and expanding into other industries. Lemery’s strategy paid off: today, 30% of its products are for new industries, including aviation, power generation, forestry and food processing.

Though Lemery grew up in the Winsert business and knew it well, assuming the company’s top position wasn’t necessarily an easy transition. Lemery was also a wife and mom with young children, juggling responsibilities at home and work and working in a heavily male-dominated industry.

To overcome those challenges for herself and others, Lemery created an environment that accommodates employees’ work-life balance, such as providing flexible shifts when family events or emergencies arise. She also recruited and promoted other talented women to key positions.

In addition, Lemery aimed to delight employees with excellent perks. She continues her parents’ tradition of treating employees like family by providing gain-sharing benefits and covering increases in health care costs.

Lemery reshaped her leadership team with Winsert veterans and new hires who backed her strategic vision and leadership style. And as the boss’s daughter, Lemery needed to build trust with longtime and newer employees, which she did with constant communication, data and transparency. She even discloses financial statements to the Winsert workforce.

“I needed to share more information with employees so they feel a part of the family business. Without our employees and their dedication and work ethic, we can’t do this,” Lemery says. “It was instrumental to getting everyone’s trust.”

Lemery still has plenty of goals left to achieve, including implementing a new, refocused five-year plan and continuing strong bottom-line growth. She plans to continue fleshing out the company’s product portfolio by leveraging its technological advances and establishing even deeper footholds in its newer

markets. And an R&D Center of Excellence, opened earlier this year, will help Winsert maintain its high-tech edge.

Lemery intends to continue building the Winsert legacy with careful stewardship and a commitment to employees and the community, eventually passing the mantle to the third generation.

“I’m dedicated to this company – I’m not just here collecting a paycheck. If you don’t have that passion and drive and obligation to take it to the next level for the next generation, maybe it’s time to leave,” Lemery says. “I’m here because I want to grow this company.”

100%

Winsert is 100% family-owned, with 205 employees

35%

New product sales accounted for 35% of Winsert’s total sales in 2015

