

Celebrating 50 Years of Innovation

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BUSINESS NEED/OPPORTUNITY / Siemens Milltronics Process Instruments Inc. (SMPI) designs and manufactures sophisticated level measurement instruments and weighing equipment used by the water, cement, chemical, milling and other process industries. Products are sold worldwide. Based in Peterborough, Ontario (population 74,000), SMPI is known for innovative technology and strong technical support. It is a subsidiary of Siemens, a global leader (480,000 people in 190 countries) in electronics and engineering. Founded in 1954 as Milltronics Ltd., SMPI celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2004. When acquired by Siemens in 2000, SMPI experienced major changes that hurt employee and distributor morale. Integration into new systems sometimes created conflict with other parts of the organization. At the same time, some product launch delays hurt the reputation for innovation, and an economic downturn adversely affected sales. The anniversary provided an opportunity to turn this around—a positive event to renew employee pride, gain positive recognition, and engage other offices and distributors in a focus on strengths and innovation achievements that would help reposition SMPI within the Siemens family.

AUDIENCES /

1. Employees and Retirees: The 300 employees in Peterborough include 180 factory/assembly workers; 65 Research and Development (R&D) engineers/technical staff; and marketing, finance and other staff functions. There is a wide range of educational background, interests and focus. Culture is informal, with a flat structure, business casual dress and many activities handled by employee committees. Employees thrive on direct involvement and fun rather than formal ceremony. There are 30 retirees, and the company maintains good contact with them.

2. Sales Partners: This includes regional sales offices around the world and third-party distributors worldwide. They are not SMPI employees. They sell a wide range of products, and SMPI competes with other product lines for their attention and sales focus. Long-term distributors have in-depth knowledge of the company and its products, while many of the Siemens sales offices are relatively new relationships.

3. Local Community and Media: SMPI is a major employer in Peterborough, actively involved in local organizations (Trent University, Fleming College, the Economic Development Corp., Chamber of Commerce, United Way, etc.). Reinforcing good relationships and raising awareness is an important part of our corporate responsibility and recruiting strategies. As a business-to-business company that exports most of its production, news opportunities with the two local newspapers (*Examiner* and *Peterborough This Week*) and the one TV station (CHEX TV) are infrequent.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES / The company wanted to maximize the value of its 50th anniversary to enhance the culture of innovation among employees and to enhance the company's reputation with external audiences. Three objectives for the overall program set the basis for more specific objectives established by sub-committees:

- ▶ Enhance employee pride and commitment to innovation.
- ▶ Create awareness of proven track record of quality, innovation and growth among target audiences.
- ▶ Position the company as innovative for customer benefit.

The employee committee set objectives for each event focused on high participation rates and high employee satisfaction with events, while remaining consistent with the theme.

SOLUTION OVERVIEW /

1. Theme and supports: A key element was the 50th anniversary icon—a golden 50 sitting on the well known “pulse” from our ultrasonic displays, along with the key message theme “50 Years of Innovation” and the SMPI name (Siemens itself is more than 150 years old, so we needed to indicate the 50 applied to SMPI). The icon appeared on letterhead, post-it notes, signage and printed materials, a flag, plant banners, and the souvenir shirt. During 2004, all SMPI product announcements and news releases referred to the 50th.

2. Employee Celebrations: 21 June was the official date of incorporation so employee events were focused in the week of 21 June 2004; however, activities spanned the year as we tied other events into the 50th anniversary theme:

- ▶ 50th anniversary banners were put up in the plant in January 2004, for visibility all year.
- ▶ Reminders: Plans were announced at the all-employee meeting in February, and we gave all employees a souvenir anniversary shirt. Upcoming activities were highlighted at the monthly managers’ meetings and quarterly all-employee meetings. E-mails and posters were used as reminders for major events.
- ▶ National Engineering Week (28 February – 7 March): The company sponsored a series of three guest lectures on innovation during lunch hour, open to all employees. One topic (the story of SMPI’s innovations presented by our VP technology) was so well received it was repeated at the managers’ meeting in March and an all-employee meeting in October, edited into a print article for distribution, and made into a webinar for sales partners.
- ▶ Flyers issued in April, August and November promoted upcoming plans.
- ▶ A printed invitation to the big 21 June event (barbeque) was sent to all employees and retirees in May.
- ▶ Employee Quilt: With the April pay stub, employees received a cloth square to design a quilt patch. The finished quilt was unveiled at the wrap-up event in December. It now hangs in the hallway near the cafeteria.
- ▶ Anniversary Week Events:
 - ▶ 21 June Barbeque – Employees posed for a group photo in a “Big 50,” followed by a barbeque and all-afternoon event under a “big tent.” The event included brief remarks by the president and division head from Germany, a ceremonial tree planting, “Fiftieth Idol” talent contest, prize draws, and sports games. Community leaders and media attended. A history display was open for viewing the entire week.
 - ▶ 22 June – Ice Cream Day – complimentary ice cream for employees donated by a long-term customer.
 - ▶ 23 June – Evening Open House Event at the plant for employees, families and guests.
 - ▶ 24 June – Pub Night/Pool Tournament.
 - ▶ 26 June – Exider Train visited Peterborough.
- ▶ Wrap-up Event and all-employee meeting on 17 December: The President reviewed highlights, thanked volunteers, unveiled the quilt and sealed up the time capsule.
- ▶ Time Capsule – contained reports, mementos, Memory Kit, products, banner signed by employees.
- ▶ Memory Kit – A folder containing the “Big 50” photo, Memory Book and Video CD. The Memory Book outlined the company’s history and highlights of the 50th anniversary celebrations, with departmental photos of all current employees. The Video CD included 50th anniversary

highlights, comments from employees about innovation, and congratulatory messages from community leaders (mayor, etc).

- ▶ The “Big 50” photo was blown up, mounted and hung in the hallway near the cafeteria.
- ▶ Media coverage – local newspaper and TV, plus company newsletters, reinforced the program.
- ▶ Employee events committee members received a thank you letter and gift certificate from the president.

3. Sales Partner Recognition

- ▶ Senior executives visited every major sales office during 2004 for face-to-face contact to build relationships.
- ▶ Souvenir shirts were sent or presented to 200 key sales and management contacts.
- ▶ The senior executive team presented a “Thank You” Webinar on 14 June for sales partners. This recognized long-term partners and chronicled company history, achievements, innovations and new products. We held three sessions to accommodate different time zones, and posted the presentation to the intranet.
- ▶ A promotional CD set to music showing our latest product innovations was issued to all sales regions.
- ▶ The launch of our “newest innovation” (the exciting new Probe LR and Probe LU products) was linked to the 50th anniversary.
- ▶ Letters and engraved plaques were presented to 18 long-term partners.
- ▶ The “Big 50” photo was included with all 2004 Christmas cards sent by the executive group.

4. Community and Media

- ▶ Donation to the Peterborough Lift Lock: We donated level equipment to this local historic site that celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2004. We invited their head engineer to speak to employees during Engineering Week. We obtained media coverage, community goodwill and a sales testimonial from this donation.
- ▶ News releases were issued 8, 21 and 25 June. Information kits were provided to media at the 21 June event.
- ▶ Media and community leaders attending the 21 June event had a VIP tour from the president.
- ▶ We notified government officials, and they sent greetings and recognition certificates, which we posted.
- ▶ Community leaders appeared in our Anniversary Video CD to comment on the company’s contributions to the community (mayor, University and College Presidents, and head of the Economic Development Corp.).
- ▶ “50 Years of Innovation” article was included in media kits and provided to visitors through the year.
- ▶ A 10-minute feature prepared with CHEX, the local TV station, celebrated the company’s history, products, and achievements. It aired in June and again later in the summer.
- ▶ Exider Train was open to the public; the mayor performed the ribbon-cutting ceremony.
- ▶ The anniversary was recognized in the company’s sponsorship of the annual “free concert in the park” series, featuring rock band April Wine on 3 September. Attendance exceeded 10,000 people.
- ▶ Participated in the chamber of commerce’s local trade fair, “Prosperity 2004,” on 6 October.

- ▶ Provided information to support our successful nomination for the 2004 Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards.

IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES / Planning began in August 2003 when the president asked the director of communications to be project manager for an employee event in 2004. We successfully proposed to the executive a more strategic approach—an integrated program with a series of events for employees, internal and external publicity, and expanded scope to include other audiences. Key strategies included:

- ▶ Sponsor a series of events throughout the year tied to a theme of on-going change and innovation.
- ▶ Celebrate technology and business achievements to build employee pride and audience respect.
- ▶ Bring external audiences into the plant to discover the world-class facility.
- ▶ Use National Engineering Week to focus on technology, R&D and innovation themes.
- ▶ Leverage existing or planned activities under the 50th anniversary banner to maximize impact.

Employee focus groups on 25 and 28 November 2003 generated ideas and identified challenges. Some employees had unrealistic expectations for lavish events. Some had attended the 40th anniversary and wanted the same activities. Some saw no role for communications in this “employee party” (Communications’ role had traditionally been only product marketing). In this context, we had to set expectations early and involve people extensively, while forging a new mandate for communications. We formed committees to directly involve more people, and invited volunteers to take part in numerous ways. A steering committee met periodically to ensure plans aligned with company objectives. Chaired by the president, it consisted of senior managers from various departments, a retiree and a union representative. We chose a popular, long-term communications staff member to lead the employee events committee, which planned and executed employee events. The employee events committee included 10 members from all major departments. The promotions committee included marketing, sales and communications staff, and drove activities for other audiences. The communications director managed the overall program, led the research, developed the theme, prepared and edited materials, supervised the implementation of all program elements, sat on the Steering Committee, and chaired the Promotions Committee.

The budget was small—the company allocated CDN\$20,000 for an employee event. We held several events for this amount by careful budgeting—by performing writing, editing, design and most photography in-house; and by obtaining CDN\$10,000 of in-kind donations from suppliers and customers. All additional activities had to be funded from existing budgets, requiring negotiation with several departments. Expenses of CDN\$18,000 for 600 souvenir shirts were absorbed into several annual promotional item/gift budgets. The shirts went to all employees, retirees, 200 key sales contacts, and to plant visitors and guests in 2004. The shirt proved a good investment—it generated goodwill, created a “team look” for the 21 June event and “Big 50” photo, and we continue to receive requests for more. Marketing absorbed the cost of plaques (CDN\$1,000) for distributors. Printing and other production expenses of approximately CDN\$14,000 were absorbed into communications department budgets.

On 4 June, we learned that Siemens would extend the Canadian tour of its Exider train to visit Peterborough on 26 June. Exider is an exhibit train that has traveled the world to promote Siemens products. Exider was a wonderful addition to the program. It broadened employees’ view of the parent company, and enhanced the community and media possibilities. It was, however, a challenge to organize this event in only three weeks. With people already stretched, we recruited a new group of volunteers to staff the registration area and entrance, organize refreshments for train staff and volunteers, and set up a children’s play area. We ordered wooden train whistles as a giveaway item for visitors. We issued news releases and placed newspaper ads inviting the public. We sent invitations to local customers and community leaders. We invited employees with repeated reminders and posters.

We prepared a brochure for visitors. We used existing Canadian tour posters at no cost, adding stickers about the Peterborough event. We placed posters in the plant and around the city. We negotiated site details with city staff and local businesses. We visited the train on exhibit in Montreal to study visitor logistics, and adjusted our plans based on that research. We arranged a ribbon cutting with the mayor and notified the media. All costs for advertising, food, materials, and rentals were tracked in a separate project account, and the total of CDN\$18,500 was absorbed into a corporate budget. Following the event, photo albums were sent to the mayor and to management in Germany as a thank you. Volunteers were treated to a special luncheon and certificate of thanks.

MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION / EMPLOYEES

- ▶ Participation at each employee event met or exceeded targets.
- ▶ One hundred employees (30 percent of the population) actively participated on committees and/or worked on events.
- ▶ The lunchtime Engineering Week lectures attracted 103 employees. On written evaluations, 100 percent said this series was a good way to celebrate innovation. All speakers received very high ratings.
- ▶ We conducted a series of written evaluations for specific events or at key points to get feedback.
- ▶ A pre-Anniversary Week survey conducted at the 2 June all-employee meeting indicated high advance awareness and intention to participate, helping us project numbers:
 - ▶ Ninety-six percent of respondents said they were aware of the celebrations.
 - ▶ Eighty-eight percent said they planned to attend the barbeque.
 - ▶ Fifty-five percent planned to attend the open house/bring a guest (projected 355 attendees).
 - ▶ Forty-three percent indicated they had completed/intended to complete a quilt square.
- ▶ A post-Anniversary Week survey distributed with pay stubs in July achieved a 33 percent return rate and showed high satisfaction rates. The results were posted publicly. Key findings were:
 - ▶ Ninety-nine percent recalled attending the barbeque (travel schedules kept some away).
 - ▶ Ninety-seven percent rated the barbeque event as good/excellent, and 97 percent said they had fun.
 - ▶ A high proportion of employees attended multiple events.
 - ▶ Eighty-nine percent said events helped them appreciate company's history and achievements.
 - ▶ Ninety-two percent said they are proud of company's achievements, and 84 percent described the company as innovative.
 - ▶ Ninety-two percent rated 50th Anniversary celebrations overall as good/excellent.
 - ▶ Sample written comments from employees included:
 - “Extremely well done.”
 - “Congratulations to the team's efforts in putting on an incredible time for us.”
 - “I'm proud to be an employee.”
 - “There have been a lot of events/activities and they've all been well done.”
 - I have been an employee for 18 years, I enjoyed the memories.”
- ▶ We gathered feedback specific to the Memory Kit in a short survey distributed after the wrap-up event.

SALES PARTNERS

- ▶ Seventy attended the 14 June webinar with 19 more downloads since then, reaching key sales contacts in 24 countries.
- ▶ New product sales ramped up quickly, and there was positive reaction to the new products, restoring the company's reputation for innovation.
- ▶ Executive management received positive responses in writing and by e-mail from sales regions and distributors regarding the webinar, plaques, events, our handling of Exider, and the shirt.

COMMUNITY AND MEDIA

- ▶ Exider: The train attracted 871 visitors (target was 600), including employees, customers and local residents, one of the highest single-day attendance figures for the train in Canada. Visitor feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the event received TV and newspaper coverage.
- ▶ The 50th anniversary events generated 14 external newspaper/magazine stories with total circulation of more than 261,930 and ad equivalency of CDN\$23,340. Two TV news items and a 10-minute TV feature (aired twice) for a total TV audience of 215,000 and value of CDN\$28,500.
- ▶ In addition, events generated 10 items in five Siemens newsletters viewed by employees, sales partners and customers worldwide (total circulation of 103,000).
- ▶ SMPI won the 2004 Business Excellence Award from the chamber of commerce in recognition of its 50 years of success and commitment to the community, and for bringing the Exider train to the city.
- ▶ The president, a member of several major community organization boards, has reported greatly increased awareness and interest in the company throughout the local business community.

SUMMARY

- ▶ The Innovation theme was successfully carried through all components and coverage.
- ▶ The numbers and various surveys indicate we achieved our objectives (enhance employee pride, create awareness, and position the company as innovative). The president described the results as "spectacular," far exceeding the original concept for a single employee party. The yearlong series of activities reinforced the innovation theme, renewed employee pride, and enhanced relationships with sales partners, the local community and media. Positive momentum has been restored in relationships with these audiences.
- ▶ An events and results presentation was updated with photos, numbers and media as events occurred. The president used this to report to headquarters in Germany in July. It was presented at the local managers' meeting in June and an all-employee meeting held 21 October to remind people of the fun events.
- ▶ We continue to track employee attitudes with feedback forms at all-employee meetings, and have launched initiatives to maintain momentum gained from the 50th anniversary celebrations, both with internal and external audiences.