



CHRIS ROBERTS, DIRECTOR HR

BUSINESS PROFILE
TIPPMANN SPORTS LLC

QUICK FACTS

Established: 1986	Employees: 112
Annual Revenue: \$40 million	Net New Hires: 42

The Tippmann family has a long history in northeast Indiana—so in 1986 when Danny Tippmann, Sr. founded Tippmann Sports it was natural to open his new business where he lived. After all, he was already intimately familiar with the low cost of doing business, the low cost of living, the skill and industriousness of the workforce, and the area’s many recreational and cultural attractions that make the region such a great place to live and work.

The decision to locate Tippmann Sports in New Haven, Indiana, turned out to be a wise one for another reason, as well. The central location put the company within a day-and-a-half of the majority of its distributors, dealers, and end-users. “We can ship from our facility to almost anywhere in the United States and Canada and have product to our customers within two days,” said Chris Roberts, director of human resources at Tippmann. “That’s a very big plus.”

In 1986, with only eight employees, Tippmann Sports burst onto the scene with the release of the SMG-60, the first-ever full- and semi-automatic paintball guns (markers) in the industry. Within a very short time, Tippmann grew from a small family business to an established industry leader with a reputation for quality products and the best customer service in the business. “Anyone who has a Tippmann paint marker will say we have the best customer service in the industry,” said Roberts. “Over 90% of product coming in for service is returned within 48 hours. That’s cutting-edge in this industry.”

During the next twenty years, Tippmann steadily built on the company’s reputation for quality and service, experiencing

double-digit growth. “Because of that growth, management spent virtually all of its time focused on keeping up with demand,” said Roberts.

Thus, along with double-digit growth came a whole new set of challenges. One of the most pressing was the need for more space: to house the growing number of employees; to store raw materials; to stockpile inventory in preparation for each year’s busy season. The other challenge was the need to build the business infrastructure necessary to support the growth. Prior to 2004, Tippmann didn’t have separate HR or finance departments, nor written policies and procedures—and there was no formal structure to provide ongoing employee training and professional development opportunities.

A Place to Grow

In 2002, Tippmann Sports began formulating plans for the needed building expansion. Working with Scott Naltner of Fort Wayne–Allen County Economic Development Alliance, Tippmann secured incentives in the form of tax abatements totaling \$249,300. According to Roberts, “Scott educated us about the process and helped us complete all the paperwork that needed to be done to secure the abatements.”

TIPPMANN SPORTS ALLEN COUNTY, INDIANA

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MILESTONES

2002

Industrial Development Grant Fund received from IEDC grant for building expansion (September)

2003

Tax abatement received—effective through 2008

New building completed (August)

2004

Company sold

2007

Training Acceleration Grant received—effective through 2009 (March)

Naltner, in turn, credits City of New Haven Planning Director Brian Yoh with keeping the process moving along. “Brian coordinated everything with Mayor McDonald’s office, keeping me abreast of what was happening, when it happened, and letting me know what needed to be done to keep the project running smoothly,” Naltner said. “In fact, Brian is the one who prepared the tax abatement proposal and presented it to the City of New Haven City Council for approval.”

Tippmann also received two grants to help fund the expansion, one from the State of Indiana’s Industrial Development Grant Fund for \$42,000 for infrastructure improvements and one from the City of New Haven for \$56,689 for acceleration and deceleration lanes on Adams Center Rd. going into the company’s property.

Naltner was instrumental in securing those incentives for the company. “We met with Tippmann constantly,” said Naltner, whose role was to facilitate interactions between the company and the state and city governments. “The Alliance was there to make sure Tippmann was able to take advantage of every opportunity available to them to stay competitive,” said Naltner, adding, “It’s an ongoing process. Even though the expansion project is complete, I make it a point to stay in contact on a regular basis. We never lose sight of the fact that Tippmann Sports has facilities in other locations. We want to make sure they’re happy right here in Allen County.”

Tippmann broke ground for the new building in 2002 and it was completed in September of 2003. “It’s quite a building, especially in comparison to the old one,” said Roberts. Although it’s not LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified, the new 89,000 square foot building incorporates many green elements. To control energy costs, the HVAC system is computer controlled and there is motion sensor lighting in the

offices. In addition, most air tools and forklifts were converted from propane to electric.

In June 2004, shortly after the new building was complete, the company was sold, making Tippmann’s need for a stronger infrastructure even more imperative. “Now that we had the space to hire, we needed to focus on building policies and procedures, implementing best-in-class processes, and providing training for new employees and integrating old and new employees into high-functioning teams,” said Roberts.

It’s the People

According to Roberts, the quality of the local workforce has been integral to the rapid growth and success of Tippmann Sports. She has high praise for the industriousness, talent, education, and strong work ethic of the area’s workforce.

“People in this area genuinely want to do a good job,” she said. “They want to see the company succeed. And they are team players who are very appreciative of all the opportunities provided to them.”

Even with the company’s rapid growth, Tippmann has been able to fill most positions locally without the need to recruit outside the area. “There is a large pool of qualified candidates in Allen County for all levels of positions, from hourly to professional,” said Roberts.

In rare cases where the company does hire from outside, the attractions of northeast Indiana make it easy to attract and hire qualified employees at a reasonable wage. The low cost of living, in particular, is a big draw. In 2009, CNN/Money cited the city of New Haven as one of the 25 towns in the U.S. where residents “see their income go the furthest” due, primarily, to housing affordability. The median home price is \$89,152; the median

family income is \$63,332. “People are not expecting to make \$100,000 a year because they don’t need to,” said Roberts.

Between 2004 and 2008, Tippmann added a net total of 42 employees to the payroll, including supervisors, sales and clerical staff, production and maintenance staff, and professional management. In order to provide the training necessary for the new hires and enhance the teamwork and productivity of old and new employees, Tippmann contracted with the Freedom Academy in Kendallville, Indiana, to provide APICS (Advancing Productivity, Innovation and Competitive Success) Training, as well as IT and communications training, and some one-on-one training to select employees to help them advance to the next level.

To finance the training, Tippmann applied for a Training Acceleration Grant from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). Brook Stead was integral to the process. “Brook held my hand through the whole process and helped us get the employee training we needed,” said Roberts. “Hats off to him for all his help.”

According to Roberts, training is especially important during an economic downturn. “When the economy gets bad, training is usually the first thing to go. At Tippmann, we continue to invest in our employees during the down times. And we will keep our good employees because we invested in them.”

A Positive Environment

According to Roberts, northeast Indiana provides a great business environment. In addition to the skilled workforce, the central location, the low cost of doing business, and the low cost of living are the intangibles that make living and working in the region so desirable for both employers and employees.

“Northeast Indiana has hundreds of lakes within an hour of Fort Wayne. No matter what you like to do—fishing, sailing,

waterskiing, or just relaxing by the water—there’s a lake for you,” Roberts said. Add to that the abundance of churches, parks, summer festivals, and other cultural events—and the downtown baseball stadium—and you have a great place to live.

Looking Ahead

Never a company to rest on its laurels, Tippmann Sports is already gearing up to meet new challenges. Paintball has evolved into a mature market in the U.S., and to meet its demands Tippmann is continually evolving, providing exciting new products and investigating new markets without ever losing sight of the top-notch quality and customer service that are the hallmark of the company. Recently, the company released four new paintball markers, and made a foray into the military market with the pepper ball Flash Launcher.

The international market is another exciting opportunity. “Four years ago, Tippmann’s international business was little or none,” said Roberts. “Now it’s almost a third of our business.” In fact, Tippmann consistently ranks as Fort Wayne’s top manufacturing exporter, and the company is looking at ways to support continued growth and participate even more in the European paintball market.

Tippmann is also looking at ways to incorporate continuous improvement as part of the company’s culture. There are talks with Ivy Tech Community College about designing an “English as a Second Language” company program to deal more efficiently with the nine different languages spoken at Tippmann. The company has also brought on an engineering intern—recruited at a local college job fair—to look at ways paintball marker parts can be recycled.

“Tippmann is continually looking for opportunities to move forward,” said Roberts. “The goal is always to grow the company—become bigger, better, and stronger.” ■

DECIDING FACTORS	SITE DETAILS	INCENTIVES
<p>1 AVAILABILITY of skilled workforce—from hourly workers to management level</p>	<p>89,000 TOTAL SQ. FT</p>  <p>OFFICE: 13,500 sq. ft. MANUFACTURING: 33,500 sq. ft. WAREHOUSE: 42,000 sq. ft. CEILING HEIGHT: 35 feet DOCK DOORS: four loading doors/three garage doors GREEN ELEMENTS: Motion sensor lighting in offices. Computer controlled heating/AC. Conversion of air tools to electric. Conversion of propane to electric forklifts.</p>	<p>\$223,800 Real Property Tax Savings</p>
<p>2 ACCESS to marketplace—central location puts company within day-and-a-half of majority of customers</p>		<p>\$25,500 Personal Property Tax Savings</p>
<p>3 LOW COST of living and recreational/cultural attractions make it easy to recruit from outside region, if necessary</p>		<p>\$42,000 Industrial Development Grant Fund from IEDC</p>
<p>4 INCENTIVES provided by the state & city governments</p>		<p>\$56,689 City of New Haven Grant</p> <p>\$42,782 Training Acceleration Grant from IEDC</p>

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING IN NEI

Indiana ranks number one in the nation in percentage of employees in manufacturing — exceeding 73,300 employees in 2008. The number of business entities in manufacturing totaled 1,400. Not all manufacturing is considered advanced, however. 82 percent of all manufacturing jobs in NEI can be classified as advanced manufacturing, and there are at least 140 businesses with 100 employees or more located in NEI.

Advanced Manufacturing Companies in NEI

- + General Motors
- + Steel Dynamics Inc.
- + ITT Communications Systems/Space Systems
- + Nucor
- + BF Goodrich
- + Fleetwood
- + B.A.E. Systems Platform Solutions
- + UT Electronic Controls
- + TI Automotive
- + Dexter Axle
- + Parker Hannifin Corporation
- + Dana Corp.
- + Group Dekko
- + Lear Corp.
- + Tenneco
- + C & A Tool Engineering Inc.

Regional Assets

- + **The Steel Dynamics Inc. Keith Busse Technology Center** is a 107,000 sq. ft. center housed at Ivy Tech's Northeast campus. In collaboration with Steel Dynamics and the Talent Initiative, more than 2.62 million dollars have been invested to support technology related activities and a new advanced manufacturing laboratory.
- + **The Haas Technical Education Center** at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne was opened to provide IPFW mechanical engineering students with hands-on training with workplace machinery.
- + **Ivy Tech and Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne** have worked closely with the manufacturing community to provide continuing education programs in engineering, manufacturing and management.

Incentives

Indiana Economic Development Corporation

- + EDGE and HBI tax credits
- + 21st Century Research and Technology Fund

- + Small Business Innovation Research Initiative

Local Communities

- + Tax abatements for new construction or equipment

Workforce Statistics

Occupation	# Employed	Mean Wage
Team Assemblers	9,490	\$29,587
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Production and Operating Workers	3,530	\$50,323
Inspectors, Testors, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	2,670	\$31,309
Assemblers and Fabricators, All Other	2,660	\$47,235
Electrical & Electronic Equipment Assemblers	1,920	\$24,002
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	1,730	\$30,797
Molding, Coremaking, and Casting Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	1,680	\$30,385
Tool & Die Makers	1,160	\$44,709
Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic	1,140	\$32,603
Packaging & Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	1,020	\$27,710
Mechanical Engineers	1,010	\$62,278
Extruding & Drawing Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	950	\$34,182
Industrial Engineers	910	\$63,540
Engineering Technicians, Except Drafters	860	\$45,450
Extruding, Forming, Pressing & Compacting Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	840	\$35,748
Electrical Engineers	620	\$78,598
Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software	590	\$76,481

source: 2008 OES data, IN Department of Workforce Development

Workforce Development

- + Ivy Tech Northeast *
- + Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne * **
- + Trine University **
- + ITT Technical Institute, Fort Wayne
- + Indiana Tech **
- + Purdue University **
- + Rose-Hulman **
- + Valparaiso University **
- + University of Notre Dame **

* Certification/Training Programs

** Graduate programs

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