

# All in the Family

When quality engineer Ferdinand Ulrich founded Ulrich Metrology in 1976, he thought he would carve out a niche offering dimensional calibration services to the aerospace and automotive industries. His approach was unique: provide Friday pick-up, weekend service and Monday morning delivery.

"I saw an opportunity, built a small laboratory in Laval, passed the necessary audits and managed to secure 25 clients in the first year," commented Ulrich's founder. "It really began as a professional side-line."



Thirty years later, Ulrich Metrology has hundreds of clients across Canada. While much has changed, the business has remained in family hands. Today, the Ulrich in charge is daughter Ingrid, who joined the family business in 1996.

Ingrid says that while there are many factors for the lab's success, commitment to meeting international standards has been very important.

"As a small business, we must continuously sharpen our competitive edge by enhancing our customer service and improving efficiency," says Ingrid.

"Over the years, adherence to international standards has provided us with a framework to improve our management practices, our quality standards and our service capabilities. We view standards as a tool for self-improvement and growth."

## The early years

During the first decade, Ferdinand ran the technical side of the enterprise, while his wife Erika handled the administration of the business. With ISO standards not yet on the horizon in Canada, many industries needed to be convinced of the value of calibration.

"I remember going to machine shops and explaining the practical benefits of maintaining, cleaning and calibrating gauges," said Ferdinand.

"These were companies that would regularly have their typewriters serviced, yet not the gauges that affected the quality of their production. Most times, they quickly recognized the value."

## Growing the business

Striving for firsts in the commercial calibration field proved to be Ulrich's path to growth and national accreditation by the Standards Council of Canada. By 1986, the company had moved to expanded facilities in Montreal and began receiving recognition for superior processes and quality. Son Anthony Ulrich, a

professional engineer, brought his skills to the technical team in 1990, and by 1994 the company was one of only four commercial laboratories in Canada to be recognized by the Department of National Defence.

In 1996, through Anthony's efforts, Ulrich became the first Canadian calibration laboratory to be certified in dimensional measurement by the National Research Council's Calibration Laboratory Assessment Service (NRC/CLAS).

"This technical accreditation was a major achievement for our company," explained Ferdinand. "It is one thing to have a quality system in place, but with CLAS, NRC professionals actually came to our laboratories to observe the team in action and assess our level of competency."

## Keeping quality key

During this period of steady expansion, quality levels remained the utmost priority. Whether providing services to a multinational manufacturer or a local machine shop, the goal was always to ensure that everyone received the same level of care and attention.

"We have never lost sight of the needs of our clients," said Ferdinand.

"When we expand the scope of our laboratories, it is because the clients need us to do so. Increasingly, they are looking for one-stop shopping solutions."

At a mature 30 years, Ulrich Metrology is an ISO 17025 accredited facility with 25 employees and significantly expanded dimensional, torque, pressure and electrical calibration capabilities. With a strong commitment to investing in equipment, facilities and technical training, Ulrich continues to be a national leader in the commercial calibration field. ■