



FIVE QUESTIONS WITH...

LINDA CLEVELAND

PRESIDENT, INDUSTRY PRODUCTS COMPANY

COMPANY PROFILE:

Who:

Linda Cleveland

Company:



Industry Products Company

Core Capabilities:

High-quality tooling; cargo and trunk systems; acoustic and water shield solutions; protective in-transit materials.

Headquarters:

Piqua, Ohio (a suburb of Dayton)

Certification(s):

WBE-; active with the Ohio River Valley Women Business Council

**Supplier Relationship
with Toyota:**

Tier I and Tier II

Linda Cleveland is president and co-owner of Industry Products Company (IPC), a company founded by her parents nearly 50 years ago. A Tier I Supplier with Toyota since 1986, IPC is still a family-operated company, owned by Ms. Cleveland and her two sisters, Debbie Hernandez and Jillayne Kirk, who are continuing IPC's legacy of excellence since assuming company leadership in 2000.

Q: HOW DID IPC GET STARTED; WHAT BUSINESS NEED WERE YOU ADDRESSING?

A: My mother and father started the business in 1966. My father, a former CPA, really wanted to have his own company. We started by cutting gaskets for Copeland Corporation (now part of Emerson Climate Technologies), which entailed an intricate process in a very niche market. IPC then diversified into other appliance and compressor-type organizations and grew from there.

We have that 'started in a garage' story – my mother oversaw the books, dad in charge of sales and they had another partner in manufacturing. Even my sisters and I were involved by being in charge of picking the slugs and ties.

After my father passed away in 1981, my husband ran the company, while I served as the HR manager for a number of years. In 2000, my husband decided to go in a different direction career-wise, whereby I went to my family and asked them to give me a year at the helm and let's see how it goes. That was 15 years ago, and I'm still here!

Q: HOW WAS IPC INTRODUCED TO TOYOTA AND WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE?

A: We began working with Toyota on a Tier I basis in 1986 with Toyota's plant in Georgetown, Kentucky. In the second year of Camry's Kentucky production, we received an opportunity to supply tire covers and door hole shields. We've been partnering with Toyota ever since.

Q: WHO ARE YOUR MENTORS AND WHO / WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

A: Through the years, I've been lucky to find people who've been helpful in every stage of our business. When I became president of IPC, I remember thinking, "Well, I may not know a lot about this but I do know the only way I'm going to learn is by asking a lot of questions." And that's what I've done – seek out mentors (there are way too many to list!) and others with experience I admire to really listen and learn from them.

My inspiration is our team members at Industry Products. The teacher in me feels a great sense of responsibility for all of the people who work with us. Their enthusiasm and vested interest in the company motivates me every day. I want everyone who works at IPC – no matter their role or how long they've worked with us – to know how important they are to our success; that they are a part of our family at IPC. Maintaining the family-owned culture keeps me going.

Q: WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN BUSINESS AND IN YOUR COMMUNITY MAKE YOU MOST PROUD?

A: Being recognized as the largest employer in the Piqua area (IPC employs ~400 people) has been a great achievement. We've grown to three plants – expanding into Mexico and Alabama, which makes me proud to see an idea in my dad's head truly come to life.

I'm also proud that IPC was able to successfully satisfy Toyota's needs during the economic downturn in 2009. Our goal is to always meet the needs of our customers, even in a pinch; we were able to do that. And during that downturn, our business actually picked up and was a big growth spurt for us.

And I am incredibly proud that since 1989, our employees have raised thousands of dollars to help local families throughout the holidays. It's particularly gratifying because our team members are doing these things voluntarily, independently coming up with ideas, organizing activities and being active in our community.

Q: WHAT'S NEXT FOR INDUSTRY PRODUCTS COMPANY?

A: We foresee continuing the type of growth we've experienced over the past few decades. Since 1996, we've been able to steadily evolve, and we are dedicated to maintaining that momentum.

I also look forward to our continued participation with the Ohio River Valley Chapter of WBENC (ORV-WBC). We've been WBE-certified since 2006 and value the networking and business development opportunities ORV-WBC provides.

Interestingly, Gene Tabor and I had been discussing the business case for partnering with women entrepreneurs for a number of years. Learning of Toyota's formalized commitment to WBEs prompted us to expand our company's involvement with ORV-WBC in an effort to build relationships with more WBEs ourselves.