

Nonprofit MDI adds "white room" work to its industrial portfolio

By Neal St. Anthony

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Industrial nonprofit MDI has opened a "white room" for kitting and assembling in a controlled environment for medical-device and tech manufacturers that also is a further diversification

The 2,000-square-foot room has a modifiable layout that permits varying product-assembly needs.

"We are the first Minnesota-based, nonprofit organization serving individuals with disabilities to provide assembly and kitting services in a white-room environment," said CEO Peter McDermott of MDI. "Our track record of high-quality work allows manufacturers to stay focused on their core competencies while helping provide more employment for people with disabilities."

MDI is located in Minnesota "medical alley," including 700 medical-device companies with headquarters or major operations.

The white room provides a controlled environment for the assembly or repair of precision equipment. MDI also delivers lot tracking and inventory control under quality-management standard ISO 9001:2008. The organization has other certifications pending.

MDI formed a medical-sector advisory group to leverage local industry knowledge. Representatives from 3M Healthcare, Intek Plastics, Medtronic, Surgical Technologies and Tapemark have counseled MDI through business strategy and development to best meet the needs of white-room customers.

The \$75,000 white room project was supported in part by grants from **the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation** and Wells Fargo.

MDI provided meaningful work to about 375 employees and contract workers at market wages to a workforce nearly half of which is people with disabilities.

McDermott said revenue was cut in half to \$19.4 million in 2017 because the United States Postal Service, its largest customer, ordered far fewer corrugated-plastic containers.

"The USPS volumes are extremely volatile from one year to the next," McDermott said.

"Hence, we need to grow MDI's other businesses. [We're] all about employment opportunities, especially for people with disabilities."

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MDI (www.mdi.org) makes standard and custom corrugated-plastic packaging solutions, as well as providing production assembly and environmental services.