

## METAL FABRICATION COMPANY DESIGNS TO GET AHEAD

**ABOUT UNIFIED DEFENSE.** Unified Defense is a privately owned metal fabrication firm, primarily manufacturing customer products, trusses, aircraft and industrial dollies, and maintenance stands for the military and private customers. The Byron, Georgia, company was founded in 2016 and has 67 employees.

**THE CHALLENGE.** After doing work for nearby Robins Air Force Base, Eric Williams, the CEO of Unified Defense, found that he needed to expand his company's product line to keep the business afloat and his employees working between military contracts. The company began to manufacture metal trusses, supplying them to commercial businesses. As that line took off, Williams realized he needed design and new product development work. A still-new company, Williams couldn't afford to hire someone with the level of product development and design expertise the company needed to ensure the quality he demanded.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** A mentor and fellow businessman who had worked with the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) at Georgia Tech, part of the MEP National Network™, recommended the organization to Williams as just the resource he needed. "He said, 'the No. 1 thing you need to do is meet Bob Wray, with GaMEP,'" Williams said. "He'll change everything for you."

Wray and GaMEP met with Williams and began designing parts for Unified Defense's new product lines. After that initial work was successful, Wray turned to creating process workflows that allow the company to manufacture custom-sized trusses to their clients' specifications more efficiently and with less cost to the company. He created a formula that allows customers to go online to input size and load variables, then receive a quote for the work. The formula also delivers plans and work orders for the shop.

Since GaMEP and Unified Defense began working together, they have expanded that collaboration as Unified Defense has expanded its business. Wray has done design work for trailers, fixtures to support aircraft maintenance, and more. "Bob Wray is great at designing fixtures for your tools, designing parts that are manufacturable, and creating process workflows," said Williams. "He's got it all. He and GaMEP provided us with a resource that gave us a leg up in the market."

"I tell every other manufacturer I meet if they're not using the GaMEP program now, then they need to get involved because it has helped us grow tremendously. We've grown 10 to 15 times larger in six years and acquired another company. We've got great product lines and state-of-the-art fixtures that are usable for manufacturing. We will definitely continue to use GaMEP."

-Eric Williams, President

## RESULTS



62 new jobs



10 to 15 times increase in both sales and employees



They recently acquired Prince Service and Manufacturing

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