Firstronic’s Juarez Facility Certified To IATF 16949:2016

Firstronic’s facility in Juarez, Mexico has been certified to the automotive quality standard IATF 16949:2016 and the latest revision of the ISO 9001 quality standard, ISO 9001:2015. The Company will be upgrading its other facilities later this year as part of the normal quality certification audit process. The migration to the latest revision of the medical standard, ISO 13485:2016 will also be completed at all facilities later this year.

“I am extremely proud of our team because all three key quality standards, ISO 9001, automotive and medical are simultaneously undergoing major revisions and the changes in these revisions are significant enough to require an extensive review of our procedures in order to efficiently and thoroughly implement them. Long-term, the changes in risk assessment and stakeholder consideration will be good for our industry but short-term this combination creates significant workload for our quality organization. I’m pleased they are meeting this challenge,” said John Sammut, Firstronic’s President and CEO.

The automotive standard represented the biggest change and its governing body is no longer the International Standards Organization (ISO). The International Automotive (Continued on page 2)

Please Join Our Team in Supporting the Children's Tumor Foundation

Four years ago, Firstronic started a fundraising effort for The Children's Tumor Foundation (CTF) by sponsoring a Golf Scramble and Dinner. Several years before, Firstronic’s CEO John Sammut had lost his son, Chase, to an inoperable brain tumor and felt strongly about supporting causes that help others who are on that painful journey. Chase would have been graduating high school this year.

Last year, Firstronic expanded its efforts to help increase awareness and funds for CTF by providing a link to CTF’s crowd funding activities so that those who weren’t participating in the golf tournament had a convenient way to support this worthy cause. You can visit Firstronic’s CTF Team page here.

Last year’s response was overwhelming. The CTF team page raised over $11,000 and the third annual Golf Outing raised over $19,000, (Continued on page 4)
Firstronic Announces Staff Additions and Promotions

**Tim Abbott** has joined Firstronic as **Director of Engineering**. Previously, he was Plant Manager-Operations for Dura Automotive. He was earlier associated with Toggled Inc., Kimball Electronics, Jabil Circuit Manufacturing and Medtronic Microelectronics Center in a variety of manufacturing management and engineering roles.

“Tim’s more than three decades of experience encompass a variety of mission critical industries. He has experience with EMS providers, as well as automotive and medical OEMs. His understanding of the engineering and manufacturing challenges our customers face, and best practices in addressing them is invaluable as we continue to grow,” said John Sammut, Firstronic’s President & CEO.

Tim is a Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt.

**Sandy Kolp** has been named **Firstronic’s Director of Quality**. Previously, she was Director of Program Management and Grand Rapids Plant Manager.

“Sandy has over two decades of experience in the electronics manufacturing services (EMS) industry, including plant management, program management and quality management positions. Her knowledge of our processes, Six Sigma Black Belt certification and extensive track record leading continuous improvement efforts make her the ideal person for this important role,” said John Sammut, President & CEO.

During her time at Firstronic, Sandy has held positions in planning, program management, and quality both as a Quality Engineer and Quality Manager. Prior to joining Firstronic, Sandy was the Quality Manager for an EMS company in Gaylord, MI.

She holds a Six Sigma Black Belt certification and is a strong proponent of a holistic focus on continuous improvement. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing Sales from Ferris State University.

**Keith Kolp** has been promoted to **Grand Rapids Plant Manager**. Previously, he served as the facility’s Production Manager.

“Keith has done an outstanding job during his time at Firstronic. Keith’s Lean manufacturing expertise and knowledge of our improvement-focused business model makes him the right choice for this position,” said John Sammut, Firstronic’s President and CEO.

Keith joined Firstronic in 2011 and has over a decade of production management and process development experience in both electronics manufacturing services (EMS) and OEM production environments, including significant training and experience in Lean manufacturing and other manufacturing process improvement techniques. Throughout his career, he has been heavily involved in continuous improvement initiative implementation. His manufacturing experience includes production environments assembling a wide range of mission-critical products.

**IATF 16949:2016**

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Task Force (IATF) is now the governing body for IATF 16949:2016.

Firstronic’s journey to IATF 16949:2016 and the role its Plex Online ERP system plays in addressing the greater emphasis on risk mitigation and continuous improvement propagated by this revision of the standard are featured in the July issue of Circuits Assembly. The full article can be accessed here.
Firstronic has begun an intensive evaluation of three SMT placement platforms and related equipment as part of its strategic planning efforts.

“We are at a point where our requirements for screen printer, placement and automated optical inspection (AOI) equipment are changing and we felt it was time to evaluate the best choices for SMT-related equipment investments going forward by actually doing side-by-side performance testing,” said Steve Fraser, Vice President of Engineering.

Firstronic’s Juarez, Mexico facility has installed and is evaluating screen printers from Panasonic and Samsung; SMT placement equipment from Samsung/Hanwha, Siemens/ASM and Panasonic; and 3D AOI machines from Koh Young and Parmi. Firstronic’s Grand Rapids, MI facility is evaluating a Samsung SMT line, Parmi AOI and TRI AOI Systems.

The Juarez and Grand Rapids facilities are both evaluating Samsung/Hanwha SMT lines. wanted input from our Grand Rapids engineering team, so we worked with Samsung / Hanwha and also installed an evaluation line there,” added Steve.

Technology, service, ease of use, and Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) have driven the evaluation.

“We have the available floor space in our Juarez facility to do the side-by-side comparison of all potential vendors. We also

Some equipment platforms are evolving to designs that put less mechanical stress on critical machine components such as the primary placement mechanism. This helps ensure repeatability and minimizes unscheduled maintenance. We’ve also seen consolidation in the equipment market drive changes in the level of support we get from our current providers and availability issues with spare parts. We’ve always believed that the Lean approach of equipment standardization is important. So, this evaluation is really designed to help select not just the equipment addressing our current expansion needs, but also our longer term equipment purchasing strategy as we replace older lines in the future,” said Steve.

The goal of this side-by-side evaluation is to determine actual equipment performance via design of experiments (DoE) and use in typical production activities. Our production operators’ feedback is also a very important component of our evaluation process.

“We feel we need to upgrade our AOI capabilities to inline 3D imaging so we are looking closely at which machine represents the best accuracy and efficiency in that area. On the SMT placement side, this test lets us better understand claimed placement speed vs actual placement speed. Our Lean manufacturing model is focused on ensuring optimum throughput so understanding exactly what each line is capable of is a critical evaluation factor,” said Steve.

Machine optimization technology is also a factor.

“We like to do family setups that enable similar products to run in a permanent set-up mode or at least for days on a line to help minimize setup and changeover times. Our evaluation is showing that improvements in the line balancing and optimization software associated with some of the new equipment further enhances efficiency in that area and has real world output closer to simulated output,” added Steve.

The evaluation period is expected to last at least six months. Firstronic’s equipment purchases based upon this extensive study will support additional capacity needs in support of its rapid business growth.
CTF Event

(Continued from page 1)

for a grand total exceeding $30,000. Not only was this a record for Firstronic’s fundraising efforts, the team at CTF said that it was one of the largest fundraising events in the Midwest.

Sign-up is still open for Firstronic’s Fourth Annual Charity Golf Scramble and Dinner for the CTF. The event will be held on Monday, July 16th, at the Timber Ridge Golf Course with registration opening at 9:30 a.m., a business update at 10 a.m. and a shotgun start at noon.

The event benefits CTF, a foundation dedicated to improving the health and well-being of individuals and families affected by neurofibromatosis (NF), the term for three distinct disorders: NF1, NF2 and schwannomatosis.

For more information on event activities, pricing, sponsorship and volunteer activities, visit: our website.

Firstronic’s team is hoping to exceed its goal this year and appreciates any support you can give.

Firstronic’s CTF fundraising efforts are done in memory of Chase Sammut.
Chase would have graduated high school this year.

Visit us on the web: www.firstronic.com