Pat Blanzy Promoted to VP of Business Development

Pat Blanzy has been promoted to VP of Business Development. Previously, he served as Firstronic’s Director of Sales & Marketing.

“I’m pleased to announce Pat’s promotion to our VP level and feel he definitely has earned it. Pat has been instrumental in securing and launching several key engagements/partnerships for Firstronic including Cooper/Hanon, AGM, Dura, Kongsberg, and MLS. He also developed an excellent quote system costing model that has enabled Firstronic to be very responsive to RFQ opportunities. Additionally, he has been an asset in ensuring smooth transitions from sales to our NPI process supporting a number of key launches. In short, Pat has been an integral part of Firstronic’s success story,” said John Sammut, Firstronic’s President and CEO.

Pat has over 30 years of experience in the electronics manufacturing services (EMS) industry, starting out as the engineering manager for a contract manufacturer in 1986. Over the course of his career, he has worked as a production manager, quality manager and director of operations.

He received his Bachelor of Science degree from Michigan State University.

Firstronic Wins Supply Chain Leadership Award

For the second year in a row, Firstronic has been recognized by Frost & Sullivan Manufacturing Leadership (ML) Council. This year, Firstronic won the Supply Chain Leadership Award in recognition of its Lean Supply Chain Project. Other companies winning awards in this category include General Electric, Hostess Brands, IBM, Lexmark International, Siemens Healthineers and USG Mexico.

“We are honored to be an award winner two years in a row. While last year’s award was for Operational Excellence Leadership and this year’s award is for Supply Chain Leadership, the common thread in both these awards is our holistic approach to Lean and

Wally Johnson, VP Finance, Supply and IT accepted the award.

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Firstronic’s Juarez Facility in Production on Several New Programs

Firstronic’s Juarez facility has begun production on three new projects likely to represent significant growth over time.

The facility is building printed circuit board assemblies (PCBAs) for GPSI for multiple models of electronic controls used for fleet vehicle tracking. The units provide tracking, telematics and content delivery for fleet operations. They enable fleet managers to monitor fleet activity, vehicle performance and vehicle readiness as well as restrict vehicle operation to certain areas. The units are installed as an option for new vehicles, and represent significant volume.

The PCBAs are some of the most complex that Firstronic builds and feature a small footprint, dense packaging, complex BGAs and small form factor parts. Firstronic developed a functional test unit and that communicates directly with the customer and downloads the latest version of firmware from the customer’s site. Programming, test and pack operations are integrated.

Firstronic has just secured a contract with a Tier One automotive supplier building PCBAs and box build assemblies in support of a battery management system (BMS) for lithium ion batteries for both motive and stationary applications. The program is in its new product introduction (NPI) phase, but is expected to represent significant business over the next two-to-three years. According to Account Director Becky Lutz, the customer has been impressed with the speed of Firstronic’s NPIs and the Juarez engineering team’s design for manufacturability recommendations. The facility has completed four NPIs since May.

In addition, Firstronic has secured a contract with Maximatecc for PCBAS that are part of direct data bus interface gauges used in motorcycles, and large motive industrial and agricultural applications. Prototypes will be delivered in Q4 2017 and PPAPs and production will begin in Q1 2018. The Juarez engineering team provided DFM recommendations as part of the NPI process. The Juarez test engineering group developed the functional tester.

Juarez Facility Improves Throughput With Innovative Wave Solder

Firstronic’s Juarez, Mexico facility installed an EPM Compact 500 wave solder in early September. The machine has the ability to read a pallet bar code and switch to the profile indicated by the bar code, enabling very high mix production.

“We continue to see through-hole technology on some products that contain switching power supplies. With a traditional wave soldering process, these products must be processed in batches. The EPM machine enables us to run multiple products with lot sizes as low as one through the wave solder with virtually no changeover time,” said Steve Fraser, VP of Operations.
Wally Johnson’s Opinion Column Featured in Automotive News

VP of Finance, Supply and IT Wally Johnson’s recent column in Automotive News warns: a perfect storm is brewing and it’s time to batten down the hatches. Automotive and other industry supply chain professionals have been seeing lead-times on passive components such as resistors, capacitors, inductors and transformers stretch out to one year or more in some cases.

This column along with articles the October issues of Circuits Assembly and Electronic Products and Technology highlight the need for closer supply chain relationships, more flexibility in approved vendor list (AVL) choices and longer forecasting windows to address the current component shortages. The full column is accessible here.

Firstronic Juarez Organizes Relief Effort for Earthquake Victims

The devastating earthquake in Mexico in early September created significant damage in several cities in Central Mexico. There are 333 people reported dead and over 4500 injured. The team at Firstronic de Juarez wanted to help support those in need after this terrible disaster. Firstronic staff Mireya Simental, Martha Berumen, Victor Contreras, Miguel Tovar, Patricia Fuentes, Hector Chufani, Enrique Silva, Oscar Nevarez and Luis Chavez helped organize a collection of donations. The team used the donations to purchase basic hygiene products, baby food, bandages, and food for people and pets. Firstronic has also arranged for transport of the supplies to the effected region.

Above, the team organizing the collection. Left: a collection bin in the Juarez facility. Right: Toiletries; food for babies, people and pets; and first aid supplies were purchased with donations.
Supply Chain Leadership Award

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ways that achieve industry-leading results. I am incredibly proud of our team,” said John Sammut, Firstronic’s President and CEO.

ML Awards winners and their partners were honored on June 14, 2017, at a gala celebration that concluded the 13th annual Manufacturing Leadership Summit in Huntington Beach, Calif.

Now in its 13th year, the ML Awards program honors organizations and individuals that are shaping the future of global manufacturing. Nominations are entered into 13 categories and evaluated and scored by a panel of expert judges. Twelve of the ML Awards categories are for outstanding projects by a manufacturing company. One category recognizes the achievements of individual manufacturing leaders.

The 91 projects and individuals on the list of ML Awards winners represent small and large enterprises in a wide range of manufacturing markets. They all leverage best-in-class processes, technologies and engaged teams to distinguish themselves from the competition. Among the winners were Merck & Co., Inc. for Big Data and Analytics Leadership, Lexmark International, Inc., for IoT in Manufacturing Leadership, and Johnson & Johnson for Operational Excellence Leadership.

“Winners of the 2017 ML Awards have proven vision and innovation are alive and well in the manufacturing industry,” said Global Vice President and Editorial Director and co-founder of the Manufacturing Leadership Council David R. Brousell. “By embracing the technology-driven transformation that we call Manufacturing 4.0, innovating new business models, and leveraging engaged workforces, these leaders are laying the groundwork for a new era of greater productivity in manufacturing.”