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Trisha Lemery

Winsert, Inc.

Winsert is a leading global provider of innovative alloy solutions to a variety of industries. It is also a second-generation family business that exemplifies the strong bond between a father and daughter and has created a world-beating manufacturer in the space of just 40 years. Based in a small town in Wisconsin, Winsert is also intrinsically linked to its community and has strong connections with all its stakeholders.





“I love being a family business. When I was little, I loved what my dad was doing, and I know he had such pride passing the business over to me.”

Trisha Lemery,
President and CEO,
Winsert, Inc.

Trisha Lemery has little doubt about the importance of family businesses, stating: "I think they are the heartbeat of America." She is infinitely well qualified to say this because she runs a very successful one, set up by her father 40 years ago and now a world-class manufacturer of specialized alloys, which are exported around the world. Indeed, Winsert is an example of the thriving, mid-sized family businesses that are the heartbeat not only of America but of much of the rest of the world as well.

Based in Marinette, Wisconsin, 260 miles north of Chicago, Winsert manufactures wear-, corrosion- and heat-resistant alloy components for applications such as internal combustion engines, power generation, emission controls, industrial valves, forestry and food processing. Winsert's patented and proprietary alloys are designed to replace costly cobalt and nickel-base alloys and have proven to increase performance while reducing the cost of the components. Indeed, the



From left to right: Trisha's brother-in-law, her sister, mother and father, founder Stephen Dickinson, Trisha, followed by her niece and nephew.

alloy maker has seven approved patents and seven patents pending, says Trisha, which is a virtually unheard of number for a company of its size. Winsert is, in many ways, the ultimate widget maker – manufacturing products that are little known except within a very specialized sector, but crucial to the smooth running of the global economy.

Winsert began back in 1977 when Trisha’s father Stephen Dickinson, an engineer with an entrepreneurial spirit, decided to go out on his own and start Winsert. “He was 29, married, and had three small kids,” says Trisha. “Taking that sort of risk back then, when the economy was weak and at his age, was, frankly, pretty stunning.” But beyond his specialist knowledge, Stephen did have one other advantage – the support of his father Donald Dickinson, who worked for his son until his retirement in 1986. By that time, Winsert was well on its way to being a successful manufacturing business.

Father-daughter bond

Trisha’s own journey into the family business was, in many ways, a standard one for a second-generation member of a business family. She worked part time on the shop floor while still at high school and later on during college vacations. Unsure of what she wanted to do after leaving college, Trisha’s father said she needed experience in the real world before even thinking of joining Winsert. So Trisha spent a year working for a hospice in South Carolina before coming back and joining Winsert officially in 1993. But her journey into the business was completely unconventional in one way – she had majored in English in college and was joining a business that was all about precision engineering and science. However, Trisha says her kind of education was actually beneficial. “To have someone like me with a Liberal Arts degree run a company is an advantage. I don’t get bogged down in all the detail. I can get out of the weeds and make decisions quickly.” That ability to see the bigger picture is something that has defined Trisha’s leadership skills at Winsert. Before she took a more senior role in the business, the company was pretty much a one-product firm, and it

was through her efforts that the family business grew into a multifaceted manufacturer of alloys and became a solutions provider to many industries.

“I saw the vision,” she says. “My dad of course had a vision, but he didn’t know how to diversify the business – but I had that vision. I could see how to take the technology forward by using it in different components within an engine and beyond.” Stephen very much bought into his daughter’s vision and, in 2008, handed over the CEO position to her, beginning a new chapter in the success of Winsert.

Stephen is still deeply involved with the business as Chairman of the Board of Directors, and he speaks to Trisha at least once a day. The relationship between the two continues to be very strong and is emblematic of how both of them feel about Winsert. “I love being a family business,” says Trisha. “When I was little, I loved what my dad was doing, and I know he had such pride passing the business over to me.” Trisha’s brother Paul Dickinson also works at Winsert – as an engineer – and her sister used to work there but is now a very happy stay-at-home mum, says Trisha.



Set up by Trisha’s father 40 years ago, Winsert is now a world-class manufacturer of specialized alloys, which are exported around the world.



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Winsert specializes in engineering ultra-strong metal alloys that are resistant to wear, heat and corrosion. It manufactures a wide array of products, from valve seat inserts and EGR components to cutting blades.

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Trisha Lemery

The bond between the family is strong, but so too is the bond between Winsert and its stakeholders. “It gets said too much, but we really do treat our employees like an extended family,” says Trisha. And being in a relatively small community makes that bond even stronger – and much closer. Her kids go to school with many of the children of Winsert’s employees. “When I do my grocery shopping, I meet with our staff. You’re connected with them so much through the community.”

That bond was, in many ways, strengthened when the business hit a rough spot during the global recession of 2008 and 2009, shortly after Trisha became CEO. Sales dropped by 67% and some staff were laid off. But it is a testament to Trisha’s grit and determination that Winsert pulled through those tough years and began to flourish again shortly afterward, largely due to her push on product diversification.

Ten thousand square feet of innovation

A big commitment to innovation is central to Winsert’s strength as a business. Much of that has happened under Trisha’s leadership, and the R&D department has grown from a one-person office to a newly purpose-built, 10,000-square-foot facility, which is named after her father. With 12 staff, the R&D department is headed by Dr. Xuecheng Liang, a world-renowned metallurgist. “Innovation is the reason why Winsert has remained world class and relevant,” says Trisha. “It has become our core competency.”

What about the next generation? Will that strong bond between father and daughter be copied by future generations in terms of how the business is run? Well, Trisha’s son already works part time at Winsert, as does her brother Paul’s daughters. Although there is no formal next-generation succession plan, Trisha says that jobs for the next generation are not guaranteed. “You don’t want to put a family member in just because they are a family member.” And she acknowledges that, as the business gets bigger, the pressure to bring in more formal succession structures will grow. That may be the case, but the example set by two generations at Winsert might be the best guarantee for the business to stay in family hands for many generations to come, and to continue to flourish as a result.

Trisha Lemery

President and CEO

Company name: **Winsert, Inc.**

Generation: **Second**

Founded: **1977 in Wisconsin, US**

Industry: **Manufacturing**

Employees (2016): **205**