

Gentlemen,

I appreciate the opportunity afforded me to discuss a few points in the professional career of Rudy Tschida of Contract Design Incorporated (CDI). I have been a customer of Rudy's for 5 years while pursuing my own career as a mechanical design engineer. I have worked on 4 projects to date spanning a multitude of different plastic injection molded tools and parts plus assembly and inspection tools. In all cases I have found Rudy to exemplify the highest standards of technical competence, business acumen, personal integrity and customer service.

CDI is consistently chosen to create the most difficult tools and supply the most precise plastic parts for our machines. He also routinely troubleshoots the tools and manufacturing processes followed in the shops of our other suppliers, some of who are his competitors. We have even resorted to moving tools out of other shops that have proven themselves incapable of producing parts of sufficient quality into CDI with good results. The success of several projects has hinged on his ability to do his work correctly.

Rudy is a critical supplier to my company. Therefore, it was important to us to understand how Rudy achieves his success, how he manages CDI, why he chooses to pursue our business and how we could best profit from his capabilities. I learned he is considered the dean of tool design, tool troubleshooting and a passionate practitioner of consistent process control in this industry by many of his peers and customers.

His training and work ethic served him well when he founded CDI in March of 1977 doing prototyping and mold repairs in a 2600 square foot shop. The shop was moved to the present location and expanded to 10,400 square feet in 1982. He expanded into product development, production mold making and injection molding in 1984. This last expansion is typical of him. He watched many of his customers mold parts using his tools and frankly use the tools in a poor manner. He bought an injection machine and quickly realized the crucial importance of good process control. He experimented with the machine and learned how to consistently shoot good parts under varying conditions when employing different materials. He continues to this day in experimenting with new materials and has even developed materials for the injection molding process. This curiosity and life-long commitment to learning and self-improvement helped him move into production molding and lead to a further expansion in 1988 to bring his building up to 25,400 square feet. He now owns the lot next door for future expansion of up to an additional 75,000 square feet. CDI historically expands during a slow economy and either maintains or increases sales during a slow economy while competitors are realizing a decrease in sales. He owns outright his entire operation.

When he undertakes a job he does it and he is a hands-on manager, directing his workforce by example when needed. There is no job in the entire facility that he can't do himself. He is a rare supplier in that his work is done with extreme precision, finished ahead of schedule and with no quality problems. This shows he and his shop possess extreme technical competence and good floor management.

I have found him to be a shrewd judge of people. In a meeting he is typically reserved, watching the meeting develop and the dynamic of the interaction between the attendees. Then when asked his opinion he is always direct and to the point, tempered by the expected reaction of the person he is addressing. He did manage a manufacturing facility with a workforce of 4000 at one time besides his management of CDI. He has very specific thoughts on how to build a workforce and his success proves his thoughts valid. He attracts and appreciates others who wish to learn. He is a natural teacher, developing his own people and helping to train his customers.

Although he has a strong personality his success comes not from mere force of will but through the intelligent application of knowledge and competence. He thrives on challenge or on learning a new skill. He is a planner's planner possessing a great curiosity about a wide variety of topics. In fact, meeting challenges and curiosity are his two strongest character traits.

He seems to need to shape his environment. He builds his own buildings and has a special interest in designing sophisticated heating/cooling systems, several of which he has built. He owns and operates heavy equipment and gives it a good workout in the summer when he builds roads and undertakes massive landscaping projects.

He is extremely rounded having many interests that seem to be at odds. He would probably say they are part of a continuum, one interest leads to and supports the other. He is a logger and a naturalist. Develops habitat for wildlife and is also a great sportsman. He is an expert marksman and a gunsmith. When a topic catches his interest (which is frequent) he will learn all he can from others, from self-study and from hands-on work trying out his ideas.

I would be very happy to discuss any point and remain available for any further help I may be able to provide.

John Titus
Senior Mechanical Engineer
Datacard Corporation
Minnetonka, MN 952-988-1582