

# **OPPORTUNITY PROFILE**

Director of Product Development

**MERCURY MANUFACTURING COMPANY**  
**OF**  
**WYANDOTTE, MICHIGAN**

Manufacturers of Precision Components  
and Pressure Relief Valves

*Ketchum & Associates, Inc.*

When locating and selecting the right leadership  
is a matter of critical importance

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your willingness to review the enclosed profile. I believe the following pages will accurately describe a truly outstanding opportunity for a technically minded individual who would enjoy working within an entrepreneurial-driven organization.

The following profile was written as a result of a recent visit to our clients facilities, located in Wyandotte, Michigan. During the two days we spent onsite, Jan Wiegand, Mercury's Executive Vice President & COO, allowed us unfettered access to her staff which enabled us to assess the culture of the company, the personalities that make up the management team, the companies goals and objectives, capabilities and hindrances. I believe this is important for you to know because as consultants to management, rather than recruiters, we are committed to thoroughly assessing each client who retains our services and each individual desiring candidacy. Only then can we make the right matches that result in long-term economic value for our clients and career satisfaction for chosen candidates.

We would welcome the opportunity to talk with someone you know who meets most or all of the requirements described in this profile. As to how they can expect to be treated:

1. **They can be assured of complete discretion on our part.** Neither their comments nor any other information they might share with us will be distributed to anyone, including our client, without their permission.
2. When dealing with our firm, interested parties will **be interfacing directly with our senior management.** There are no junior associates employed in our firm.
3. **We treat everyone the way we would want to be treated if our positions were reversed.** This practically translates into:
  - a) doing what we say we are going to do and in a timely manner
  - b) promptly returning phone calls
  - c) providing frequent and honest feedback to both candidates and clients

As to our veracity in adhering to the above mentioned points, we would invite all interested parties to "check us out" by contacting anyone we have done business with before. You'll find we are unusual: **we would much rather conduct 30 searches each year in an exceptional manner than executing 300 in a mediocre manner for the sake of increased revenue generation.** Why? Because we feel it's not only our mission, but our calling: **To perform the highest quality, most ethical search work that results in an exceptional long-term value for both client and candidate.**

Thank you again for your willingness to review the following profile and if you are ever in a position to recommend a retained executive search firm, we would appreciate the remembrance.

Jeffrey R Ketchum  
Chairman & CEO  
Ketchum & Associates, Inc.

## **THE OPPORTUNITY**

Mercury Manufacturing of Wyandotte, Michigan is a quality driven manufacturer of precision components including pressure relief and check valves for refrigeration, air conditioning and automotive markets. The company is currently seeking to identify a key individual for their executive management team who will be responsible for all product design and development activities. The new team member will have the opportunity to creatively structure and build upon an existing engineering function within an entrepreneurial-driven organization that is poised for significant growth over the next three to five years.

The opportunity at Mercury Manufacturing would be well suited for a seasoned engineering supervisor, manager or chief engineer who would find meaning in working within a “hands-on”, self-directed, small company environment that fosters high quality standards and a reputation for customer excellence.

Opportunity for future growth abounds not only corporately, but also personally. Company revenues have the opportunity to double within the next five years and in doing so will provide ample opportunity for skills to be demonstrated in many different areas. Should the chosen manager have additional “executive level” skills such as strategic planning, this could lead to additional responsibilities as the company continues to grow.

Many reasons may lead a seasoned engineering manager with a background in valve design and development to explore this very special opportunity. Perhaps an individual is currently working for a larger company and desires to work in a smaller, less bureaucratic, entrepreneurial environment. Another reason that might lead someone to candidate for this position is their desire to manage less and play a more crucial role in the “hands on” design/development of a product line. Other reasons may be more lifestyle related – the appeal of living within minutes of Lake Erie boating, fishing and numerous golf courses.

The right person will be attracted to the company’s people, its working environment and its tremendous potential for growth. This is truly an exceptional opportunity for the right individual.

## **THE COMPANY**

Mercury Manufacturing was founded in 1964 by Fred May, a tool and die maker by trade, and was initially located in River Rouge, Michigan. In 1970, the company relocated to Wyandotte, Michigan and continued operations in a single facility until twelve years ago when expansion became a necessity. Since then, the company has moved into three additional buildings located on the same city block. Currently the company occupies 52,000 square feet of space and employs approximately 90 people, of which 13 are salaried employees. Revenues are estimated at \$13 million dollars.

Mercury was originally founded as a screw machining job shop serving the automotive industry. However, over time the company has developed into an assembly specialist providing value-added secondary services. Today the company focuses operations in two complementary core competencies:

The first area of competency includes continuing operations providing medium and high volume precision machined components, with value-added secondary CNC and induction hardening processes. The primary industries supported by this area of the business include marine, automotive and light/heavy truck engine and transmission production. In addition, this operational area frequently produces components to support Mercury’s second core competency of special assemblies, including pressure relief devices and other valves.

The special assembly and valve area represents the second core competency and most promising future growth opportunity for the company. Mercury Manufacturing participates in the design, development and manufacture of a variety of pressure relief devices for the refrigeration and air conditioning markets, and is a high volume producer of check valves for the automotive sector. Mercury also produces a variety of light, mechanical assemblies for various industries.

The company's leadership team consists of:

- **Jan Wiegand** - Jan originally began working for Mercury when she was 12 years old, but officially began serving in a treasury function in 1991. In 1996, she moved into her current role of Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. Jan holds a Bachelor's Degree in both Accounting and Marketing and an MBA in Finance. She is considered by her management team to be a joy to work with.
- **Alan Piurkowski** – Alan came to Mercury in 1987 after having spent 15 years with Federal Screw Works, a renowned Tier 1 supplier of fasteners to the automotive market. Alan held several positions with Federal Screw Works where he interfaced closely with senior officers and managers to define strategic planning and implementation objectives. After initially joining Mercury as Materials Manager in 1987, he was promoted several years later to the position of Plant Manager. In his current position, Alan is responsible for ensuring the highest level of customer satisfaction while working to achieve optimal efficiencies in daily plant operations.
- **Erv Denning** – Erv originally came to work for Mercury after having spent 30 years with Weltronic where he was Director of Engineering. Since 1989 Erv has served in his current position of Director of Product Development. Erv will retire from full time active service with the company in November of this year. Erv holds a Bachelors Degree in Electrical Engineering.

The **vision** expressed by both the company owner and executive leadership is “To develop a world class organization providing superior value to our customers through high quality, technologically advanced, fairly priced products and outstanding customer service”. Mercury believes people are their greatest asset, making a critical difference in how well they perform. This can be attested to by the fact that the first employee hired in 1965 is still currently employed. Additionally, there are many other employees who have over 20 years of tenure with the company. Both of these examples attest to an old fashioned sense of loyalty that exists at Mercury, between employer and employee, which is so rarely evident elsewhere in the business world these days.

The **mission** of Mercury Manufacturing is “To satisfy customer expectations throughout every level of our organization. Our resources will be concentrated on efficiency, product quality and responsiveness to customer priorities.” The company pursues this mission through its commitment to several objectives:

- **Reduction of waste streams utilizing lean manufacturing practices and principles.** Over the years Mercury has received training in “Lean Principles” via external consultants, and in 2001 began working with The Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center (MMTC). To date the entire organization has participated in lean orientation training, and with the help of Mercury employees, MMTC has conducted several implementation activities. Through its commitment to lean practices and principles, Mercury has achieved several noteworthy improvements including
  - ✓ Reduced changeover time by 50%.
  - ✓ Decreased set-up time for specific product lines by as much as 94%.
  - ✓ Increased cell operating efficiencies by 45%.
  - ✓ Improved plant-wide inventory turnover from 6.7 to 12 turns.
  - ✓ Reduced purchased components inventory by over 50%.

- **Achievement of 100% on-time delivery of quality product to its customers.** Mercury frequently receives customer recognition for the achievement of 0 PPM and 100% On-Time Delivery of high volume, critical components. The company enjoys the position of being a single source supplier for the majority of its customers, attesting to the company's reputation of quality performance.
- **Maximizing continual improvement of products and processes.** This is most recently evidenced by Mercury's achievement of ISO 9000:2000 and ISO/TS 16949 certification, the newest world automotive quality standard. The company promotes and provides a variety of training opportunities including such topics and Six Sigma and Lean Champion courses to equip team members with the tools necessary to promote and achieve continual improvement initiatives.

The bottom line to this opportunity with Mercury Manufacturing is that it is a great time to join a reliable, stable, well positioned company. Mercury has a tremendous amount of potential given the current and future opportunities that exist for its product lines.

## THE POSITION

The position is located in Wyandotte, Michigan and will report directly to Jan Wiegand, COO of Mercury Manufacturing. The Director of Product Development position is described as an "empowered", senior technical position within a "roll up your sleeves, self-directed" type organization.

The position currently has no direct administrative reports although it does have several functional reports which include a process engineer who coordinates testing for ASME and UL certifications and an outside contract engineer who has assisted Mercury for 10+ years. Within the near term, Mercury looks forward to adding an engineering coordinator to this department and depending on the managerial traits of a prospective candidate may reorganize other engineering functions under this position.

The new Director of Product Development will be solely responsible for the design, development and testing of the valve product line. Traditionally the company has derived less than 10% of its revenue from this product line. However, in 2005 revenues from the valve product line are forecasted to be approximately 25% and in coming years could represent the majority of revenue generated for the company. As such, **it is imperative that the new Director be competent in the areas of pressure relief and check valve design, development and testing.**

The responsibilities for this position, among others, include being able to provide value engineering to standard products, continually looking for a "better" way. As such, the right candidate will be able to develop conceptual, detail and layout designs from provided samples, performance specifications or verbal instructions. The new director will perform complex engineering studies and analysis to determine design feasibility and will be involved in the creation of design and process FMEA's. This individual will run experiments and will design and coordinate bench and production test strategies for flow and fatigue performance. Additionally, they will troubleshoot performance issues within the design utilizing root cause analysis and then provide creative solutions to the concerns. Testing and validation of valve products requiring ASME or UL approval will be a significant responsibility in this position.

The Director of Product Development will be the primary customer interface for Mercury with pressure relief and check valve customers. Within these customers the new Director will be interfacing with the engineering, quality, purchasing and manufacturing departments. Customer development skills are crucial in this position and will become even more of a requirement throughout the growth curve anticipated in 2005-2010. Overnight travel to

customer locations is estimated at 15-20% and although most travel is within the continental US, some foreign travel will be required.

The Director of Product Development will be called upon from time to time to provide technical knowledge to both the manufacturing engineering department and the quality department. As such, the new Director must be well versed in problem solving and possess an “investigative instinct”.

Additionally, a key part of this position will be to research and source new suppliers as well as being able to troubleshoot material and process problems within existing suppliers.

The new Director will participate in daily manufacturing engineering meetings and monthly management reviews. They will provide quarterly reports to the ownership of Mercury and may on an infrequent basis communicate directly with the owner of the company, Fred May.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

Given the “valve design and development” emphasis in this position, the right candidate will have participated in the design, development and testing of valve product lines, with preference towards pressure relief and check valves. They will be familiar with ASME and UL requirements and testing procedures. They will be experienced in engineering analysis (PFMEA’s, FMEA’s, and DFM’s). They will have prior experience in the design and coordination of bench tests, flow tests and other fatigue testing procedures.

Additionally, the right candidate will be familiar with automotive manufacturing processes utilized in making high volume, high quality products. They will have an in-depth working knowledge of assembly automation and process instrumentation. The right candidate will have a working knowledge of tooling and be able to scout and source new suppliers.

The selected individual will be able to articulate themselves well and will be able to explain complex terms and valve functions to staff members who have limited technical knowledge. They will be skilled at forming relationships with both co-workers and customers and may have at one time in their career served in a sales or sales engineering function.

The ideal candidate will be organized and have exceptional project management skills. They will be accustomed to working under deadlines and most importantly have a track record of meeting them when faced with competing priorities.

Ideally, the new Director of Product Development will understand the marketplace of Mercury Manufacturing’s products. They will possess a great deal of “strategic business sense” and will be able to interpret industry trends such as “variable cam timing” and offer suggestions to Mercury’s ownership and leadership as to how to take advantage of these trends and thereby increase revenues and profits.

To have properly prepared for a position of such leadership with Mercury Manufacturing, the right candidate will have been a part of a major growth initiative within their previous employer(s). They will have previously tasted success! They will be able to add value to Mercury by not only having the knowledge and experience required to continue the product development function, but will have prior managerial experience and the ability to build a competent engineering department as the business grows.

An engineering degree is required and a graduate degree in engineering, management or marketing would be well received.

## **PERSONALITY & MANAGEMENT STYLE**

The ideal candidate is someone who is self-directed and can think for themselves. They are creative and resourceful. They are a high energy, self-starter who is easy to work with. They are mature in their thinking and emotions and comfortable and confident in who they are. They are not looking to change the world, but are very willing to plug into a good system that can be made better by their contributions. He/She by nature may be an introvert but is bent towards being an extrovert.

The successful candidate will be accustomed to work with individuals, regardless of age, race, education level or sex. They will find ease in communicating with all functions within Mercury including finance, operations, quality and human resources. They will know how to motivate others and therefore garner the support of internal resources. They will be accountable not only to management, but to the rest of the team members. The finalist candidate will be able to set a good example for other managers and employees and will demonstrate a high degree of professionalism, tact and diplomacy in all they do. Social skills are extremely important in this position in maintaining relationships with Mercury's customer base.

Very important to everyone at Mercury is avoiding hiring someone who is set in their ways and unwilling to change. This would drive a wedge into the "team" spirit that is being developed. "A person that is mellow and flexible would work well here", said one member of the management team. "We need someone who is tremendously analytical yet possesses a high degree of patience combined with a strategic mindset", said another member of the management team. In the end, the selected individual will be one who is viewed as being respectful, considerate, fair and approachable by those they have worked with in the past.

The right candidate will have a moral compass pointing due north and will personally exude the values espoused by the company, such as integrity. The new Director of Product Development will have sound judgment and bring several points of view into consideration when making decisions versus "it's my way or the highway" type mentality.

The environment within Mercury Manufacturing is "one of empowerment" and as such the new Director of Product Development will need to exude leadership skills that reflect this versus being a micro manager of tasks or people.

## **THE LOCATION**

It is quite probable that the right candidate has enjoyed living in a locale similar to Southeastern Michigan. Maybe the candidate grew up in the immediate region or in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio or Wisconsin and would like to return to their roots. Regardless, they must value the quality of life in the "Midwest" as a great place to live.

Located in Southeastern Michigan, Wyandotte is a city within 20 minutes of metropolitan amenities. The city has a population of 28,000 people located over 5.54 square miles. Boating, fishing, sailing and other water activities are located within minutes of Mercury's headquarters.



Our client is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, color, religion, sex, ethnic or national origin, or physical handicap.

If you know someone who meets most or all of the requirements described in this brochure, please feel free to suggest that person for consideration. If possible, it would be helpful if that person were agreeable to your nominating them.

We fully respect the need for confidentiality of information supplied by interested parties and assure them that their backgrounds and interests will not be discussed with anyone, including our clients, without their prior consent, nor will reference contacts be made until mutual interest has been established.



*Ketchum & Associates is a retained executive search firm dedicated to assisting clients in identifying, attracting and hiring leadership within the 90th percentile. Our mission is to perform the most professional, highly ethical search work, which results in the creation of long-term value for our clients. We are a generalist firm, serving the business world since 1998.*

*Gladstone, Michigan \* Fort Myers, Florida \* Risor, Norway*

To be considered for candidacy, please forward a copy of your resume along with a cover letter explaining your interest to:

**LINDA NYBERG, Vice President**

Tel: (906) 428-9330 ext. 201  
lnyberg@ketchumassoc.com

*Ketchum & Associates, Inc.*

When locating and selecting the right leadership  
is a matter of critical importance

Post Office Box 127  
Gladstone, Michigan 49837  
Phone: 906-428-9330  
www.ketchumassoc.com