Cortez Promoted to Program Manager

Jose Cortez has been promoted to Program Manager. He is based out of Firstronic’s Grand Rapids, MI facility. Jose joined Firstronic in 2010 as an SMT operator. After demonstrating his desire for bigger opportunities and growth within the company, he moved into the positions of Engineering Associate, Shift Supervisor and Training Coordinator over a three-year period. Prior to joining Firstronic, he spent six years working in injection molding and metal stamping operations.

“Jose epitomizes the work ethic and drive that is part of Firstronic’s culture. He has acquired the skills needed to

Firstronic Wins Global Trader of the Year Award

Firstronic was named Global Trader of the Year at the 14th Annual Automation Alley Awards Gala held on Sept. 12th at the MotorCity Casino Hotel in Detroit. Automation Alley’s Annual Awards Gala honors technology organizations and their leaders. The event was attended by over 300 and celebrated the accomplishments and continued growth of the individuals and companies moving Southeast Michigan’s technology economy forward.

Award winners were chosen based on a combined score, which took both a public online vote and the votes of a new Luminary Committee comprised of regional leaders into consideration.

“It is great to be headquartered in a region of the country that truly appreciates its manufacturing base and recognizes successful business models. Our team has worked diligently to evolve our company from a regional focus to a global business and this award is recognition that these efforts are getting noticed. The fact that our Grand Rapids facility has more doubled in employment over the last year as a result of business awarded from companies around the globe demonstrates that our ‘Made

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Firstronic’s new 70,000 square foot facility in Juarez, Mexico began production qualification runs this month. Facility preparation was completed earlier in September and the first two SMT lines have been installed.

“We have a team that is very experienced in working in Mexico. I’m very pleased that they were able to meet our aggressive two-month facility ramp-up schedule,” said John Sammut, Firstronic’s President and CEO.

The new facility is only about five minutes away from the Mexican border across from El Paso, TX, providing the cost advantages of Mexico and the logistics simplicity of the El Paso/Juarez border crossing.

“The latest Boston Consulting Group Cost-Competitiveness Index indicates Mexico has lower average manufacturing costs than China. It also found that China’s cost advantage over the U.S. has shrunk to less than 5 percent. We felt that adding a facility in Mexico was critical to providing our customer base with a two-tiered approach in North American manufacturing options that combines a cost competitive ‘Made in USA’ solution with a Mexican manufacturing facility for customers seeking to increase local content. We will also continue to provide solutions in Asia and the EU with our joint ventures in China and the Czech Republic,” added Sammut.

The facility’s quality management and management information systems mirror those of Firstronic’s Grand Rapids, MI facility.

Initially, it will have two SMT lines, with plans to eventually expand to seven lines as the business continues to ramp up.

“The Juarez facility combines the best of both worlds: a quick commute for customers and the cost advantages of Mexico. It also simplifies logistics for the automotive customer base we support in Mexico,” added Sammut.
Key Leadership Team in Place at Firstronic’s Juarez Facility

The Juarez, Mexico facility’s key leadership team is in place and deserves huge praise for the fast facility preparation and production launch.

“Our core leadership team in Juarez is extremely experienced in electronics manufacturing and I’ve had the pleasure of working with all of them previously. Production start-up has gone flawlessly and we look forward to the continued ramp-up of volume production,” said Steve Fraser, Vice President Operations.

Key team members are Victor Contreras, Senior Manufacturing Engineering Manager; Sergio Balderrama, Materials Manager; Carlos Rodriguez, Quality Manager; Enrique Silva, IT Manager; and Angel Hurtado, Test Engineer.

Victor Contreras has over 20 years of manufacturing engineering and engineering management experience within the Juarez maquiladora industry. Prior to joining Firstronic as Senior Engineering Manager, Victor served as Engineering Manager for EPIC Technologies for 12 years in their Juarez manufacturing facility. Prior to this he was a Manufacturing Engineer at Alcoa-Fujikura for 5 years. His experience includes Siemens, Universal, DEK, MPM equipment as well as convection, vapor phase, and leaded and lead-free processes. Victor has a degree in Electronics Engineering from Universidad de Tecnologico de Juarez. He joins Firstronic’s Juarez facility as “Employee #1”.

Sergio Balderrama has 18 years of experience in supply chain management and engineering, 11 of which were in the electronics manufacturing services (EMS) industry. Prior to joining Firstronic as Materials Manager, he was a Commodity Manager at EPIC Technologies. He was earlier associated with ITESM, EPIC Technologies and Avery Denison in Six Sigma and Lean Sigma Black Belt positions. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Systems Engineering from Instituto Tecnologico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. He is a certified Six Sigma Black Belt through ASQ and a certified Six Sigma Master Black Belt through Villanova University.

Carlos Rodriguez brings a decade of quality leadership experience. Prior to joining Firstronic as Quality Manager, he was Lean Manager at Heil Trailer. He was earlier associated with ITESM, EPIC Technologies and Avery Denison in Six Sigma and Lean Sigma Black Belt positions. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from the Universidad Tecnologico de Monterrey, Chihuahua. He also holds an APICS certification.

Enrique Silva has over a decade of IT-related experience. Prior to joining Firstronic as IT Supervisor, he served as IT Coordinator at EPIC Technologies. He was earlier associated with ITESM, EPIC Technologies and Avery Denison in Six Sigma and Lean Sigma Black Belt positions. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Systems Engineering from Instituto Tecnologico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. He is a certified Six Sigma Black Belt through ASQ and a certified Six Sigma Master Black Belt through Villanova University.

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Firstronic Hosts MiDevice Medical Consortium Meeting

Firstronic hosted the MiDevice Medical Consortium meeting on July 22nd. Firstronic has been a member of the consortium for five years.

The MiDevice Consortium was founded by The Right Place and consists of 30 different manufacturing companies located throughout west Michigan. Member companies are dedicated to medical design, development, manufacturing and distribution. Each fills a unique supply chain niche and is part of a regional effort to ensure that companies locating in Grand Rapids’ Medical Mile have a strong core of qualified suppliers.

Every other month members meet to discuss medical topics, upcoming events, the latest news and growth trends in Michigan. The consortium works as a team to provide opportunities to all members. Most members supply manufacturing services to industry sectors outside of the medical sector, as well.

The guest speaker at the meeting was Brent Nowak, Ph.D who is an Associate Professor in Mechanical Engineering at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), Grand Rapids and the CEO/CTO of OrthoForge, Inc. Over the last seven years he has been active in the medical device arena and prior to joining GVSU, he founded and led the Robotics and Intelligent Machines Laboratory at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

After a brief presentation by Firstronic’s Plant Manager Sandy Kolp and Tony Bellitto, Quality Director, consortium members were taken on a tour of Firstronic’s manufacturing facility. Following the business meeting, Dr. Nowak’s presentation and the tour, team members were able to network. The feedback on the event was very positive.

Members of the MiDevice Consortium went on a plant tour during their recent meeting at Firstronic’s Grand Rapids, MI facility.

Firstronic’s Global Trader of the Year Award

Award

(Continued from page 1)

in USA/Made in Michigan’ solutions are globally competitive,” said John Sammut, Firstronic’s President and CEO.

Firstronic has had a greater than 50 percent compound annual growth rate for the past three years. In addition to supporting U.S. customers, its Grand Rapids facility exports products to Korea, Mexico, China and throughout Europe.

Cortez

(Continued from page 1)

grow as our company has grown. Most importantly, he brings the right skills set to program management. We have a high number of project start-ups with complex qualification processes and having a technically knowledgeable program manager is key to meeting customer requirements,” said Steve Fraser, VP Operations.

Jose has been a Certified IPC trainer (CIT) since 2011. He is currently pursuing a degree in business management at Grand Rapids Community College.
Firstronic was featured in a three-part series in Industry Week: **Part I – Who Says You Can’t Manufacture Electronics in the U.S.**, **Part II – Workforce and Lean Strategies Help Keep Manufacturing in the U.S.**, and **Part III – Leveraging IT for Competitive U.S. Production**. Click on each title to read the full article.

Lean manufacturing principles are used to optimize schedule flexibility. Global materials sourcing helps ensure competitive pricing. Firstronic is certified to ISO 9001 and ISO/TS16949.

**Firstronic in the News**

Team

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Angel Hurtado has worked in the consumer electronics, automotive and industrial sectors of EMS manufacturing for 17 years. Prior to joining Firstronic as a Test Engineer supporting ICT and functional test platforms, he spent 10 years as a Test Engineer at EPIC Technologies. Previously he was associated with Philips. He holds a North American Quality Core Tools Certification. He is Green Belt Certified through ASQ. He is also certified on the Agilent/HP 3070.