

Announcer:

It's Mornings with Dave, Doreen, and Gino on Milwaukee's Hometown Rock.

Dave:

Good morning. Thank you for listening to us. Dave, Doreen, and Gino, The Morning, KLH, and we are live this morning at IBVI industries for the blind and visually impaired. And we talked to Emmanuel, um, last hour. Emmanuel Vouvakis is the chief innovation officer. Emmanuel, thank you again for joining us. We appreciate it. And uh, Jeff [Spaniko 00:00:27]. Did I say your name right, Jeff?

Jeff:

Correct.

Dave:

Uh, Jeff you're a machinist here and you've been here for how long?

Jeff:

I've been with the company for 16 years, but uh, as a machinist, uh, the last three.

Dave:

Okay. And you, you are uh, intimately involved in making that skill craft pen that everybody loves so much?

Jeff:

Uh, yeah, I guess you'd kinda say that.

Dave:

Yeah.

Jeff:

Yeah. I run a full, uh, it's called a V-mark, uh, pen assembly machine. It has seven stages of putting the pen together and uh, so it usually can crank out about, uh, about 15000 a day.

Doreen:

And tell us about the pen, I wanna hear about the pen.

Jeff:

Ah, the pen, uh, we have different varieties of pens, uh, but our- our main ones uh, that we sell to the government are uh, special in a way because, uh, I'm sure, uh, as Emmanuel, has, uh, alluded, uh, a pen can write for up to a mile. And also-

Dave:

A mile?

Jeff:

Yes.

Dave:

So, if you ever need a pen that needs to uh, write a mile, (laughter), you know, we're the one. You know?

Doreen:

You just never know.

Jeff:

Yes.

Dave:

But- but wait a minute, w- uh, Emmanuel you were saying though that uh, not only does the pen write for a mile, but you guys have to prove that because it's a claim that you make, right?

Emmanuel:

Well, no, it- it's not a claim. It's a requirement.

Dave:

A requirement. Okay.

Emmanuel:

So, it's a government requirement. Everything we do with, uh, that- that deals with military has some specification associated with it. So, like a foam you'd use has to have, be a certain type and it has to- [crosstalk 00:01:57]

Dave:

Well, how do you prove that something writes for a mile.

Emmanuel:

Well, you- you have to test it. So, ever lot, you have to test every lot and- and show-

Dave:

Can Gino come and walk for a mile with a pen in his hand and see ...

Gino:

Right, I'll go to Greenfield Park and back. (laughter)

Emmanuel:

You just take the pen and walk with it.

Gino:

That's right. Just don't ... I'd need a really long piece of paper.

Dave:

How you doing, Gino? "I'm two-tenths of a mile in."

Gino:

And we have to apologize to Jeff, because he listens to the show. Sorry about that. (laughter)

Jeff:

No, it's great.

Gino:

You can do better. (laughter)

Dave:

No, we can do better, Gino.

Gino:

Yeah, no, that's for sure. No I meant he can do better, a better choice.

Jeff:

Oh no, it's great. Uh, I've been a fan for years.

Gino:

Thank you.

Dave:

Thank you [crosstalk 00:02:32]-

Doreen:

Is the pen now just for the military or is this something anybody can buy?

Emmanuel:

Well, you can technically buy it but it's usually the government uses ... it says US government on it. It's a black pen. We had uh, 50th anniversary this year of the pen. So ...

Dave:

How many did you say you make a day, Jeff?

Jeff:

Uh, up- upwards of around 15000.

Gino:

Wow.

Dave:

15000 a day?

Doreen:

A day?

Jeff:

Yes.

Doreen:

That's amazing.

Dave:

That is incredible. Now I think what we need to make clear to people about what you guys do here, is that this is not just, um, and Emmanuel, I'm going to ask you to address this. This is not busy work. This is an upwardly mobile kind of thing. You can move up in this company. You can grow and I think that's really important for people's psyche.

Emmanuel:

That is, uh, because again, if you put people in a box, and you know, you identify limitations, what we try to do, is we try to identify the opportunities for growth, right? So that- that's kind what my function is, and through technology right now, we're trying to do that 'cause, again, in the past, you know, people had been limited, you know, basically because of the ... non-availability of products, or software for example, software now that we implement is accessible, uh, fully accessible, uh, they have a program called JAWS that we run. Uh, so what it does is basically it's a- it's a screen reader, but it goes really fast. It sounds almost like in a commercial where you hear the-

Dave:

Yeah, where they-

Emmanuel:

... disclaimer. And- and-

Gino:

Oh yeah.

Doreen:

Yeah.

Emmanuel:

And the amazing thing is, uh, uh, so our customer service, for example, has the ability to listen one, on- on- on, uh, on a headset, and respond to somebody in real time.

Dave:

Wow.

Emmanuel:

So- so, yeah. So- so our people are phenomenal in the sense that- that- that uh, the employees that we have here, they have a phenomenal, um, uh, spatial awareness, uh, that we don't.

Emmanuel:

The sighted people. They have the ability for clarity of thought. Because when people will think clearly, what do you do? You want to think clearly, you shut your eyes.

Dave:

Yeah.

Emmanuel:

Right?

Doreen:

Yeah, right.

Dave:

Right.

Gino:

That's right.

Doreen:

Right you block everything. Yeah.

Emmanuel:

You ... Cause you want to block that input out, right?

Dave:

Yeah, right.

Emmanuel:

So- so- so, they have that in spades. They have tremendous, uh, uh, capacity for memorization and recollection. So, they remember everything. So, when you read something or like a Power Point, they- they remember everything about that Power Point. It's sort of like in the old days before everybody had an iPhone, you used to remember everybody's number.

Doreen:

Yeah.

Dave:

We just talked about that.

Doreen:

Yeah.

Emmanuel:

Right?

Dave:

Yeah, how our memories ... the only thing we remember now is how to access-

Doreen:

Utilize-

Dave:

... the information.

Doreen:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Dave:

That's all we know.

Doreen:

Right.

Dave:

Yeah.

Doreen:

We don't even give ourselves a minute to think about it, it's like, "Hey what was that? Here, let me look it up." And we're looking it up.

Dave:

So, this is a great opportunity-

Doreen:

Yeah.

Dave:

... for- for people who are impaired or are blind to be able to not just come and be busy, but to come and apply this very specific skill set they have. In a way that those of us who are sighted can't even imagine.

Doreen:

And they can make a real difference.

Emmanuel:

Correct. So what we're trying to do is that, now we're trying to transcend basically from just the manufacturing jobs to more office re- related opportunities for positions. And that's what we're working toward right now. Like in, uh, we have people now that are working procurement that can do, uh, purchase orders and sales orders. And customer service. Our customer service department is, uh, uh, is staffed fully by- by individuals that are blind and visually impaired.

Gino:

Jeff, I asked this of Emily earlier, what does this place mean to you?

Jeff:

Oh uh, it's- it's ... provides a great family atmosphere too, as well as employment and uh, just, it's- it's a- a good thing to come every day. I mean, you know, you look forward to coming to work and not only is it a pay check but uh, you make some really good friends and it's- it's a good time.

Gino:

You can tell that Jeff's one of those guys that really unifies the place he works at.

Dave:

No doubt.

Doreen:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Gino:

Yeah.

Dave:

And it's not just cause he's, ur, got a really cool tee shirt on. (laughter)

Doreen:

He does. Yeah.

Dave:

Johnny Hammer's, I think that's really cool. Thank you very much for inviting us here today. Thank you for filling us in on what you all do here, and it- it's really ... I mean it's- it's an amazing, it's like a- it's a mission that you guys do every day. You come here. It's a calling and it's something very important that people need to know about. IBVI.

Emmanuel:

It is.

Dave:

Thank you very much for having us.

Emmanuel:

Thank you.

Jeff:

Thank you.

Dave:

Emmanuel, Jeff, thanks. We appreciate you listening too. Thank you, Jeff.

Jeff:

All right.

Dave:

We'll be back with a Hollywood update with Gino, including Russel Crow talking about the woman who is responsible for his career. Good or bad. (laughs) You'll hear all about it next.

Announcer:

Membership has it's privileges ... privileges.