

► **Aimtek Inc., Auburn**

As things change, the family stays the same



From left: Jay Kapur, general manager; his wife, Rebecca, production manager; Rita Kapur, senior vice president; and founder Amar Kapur, president.

PHOTO: MATT VOLPINI

your (larger) competitors, you get the sense of it that maybe it's time to rethink our strategy."

Aimtek is actually three companies, all in Auburn. In 2000, it acquired Bay State Surface Technologies, which makes plasma spray equipment and powders. Three years later, it bought Atech Turbine Components. Atech overhauls and repairs turbine engine components for the Canadian division of Pratt & Whitney.

That's where two of Amar and Ani's four children — Jay and Rita — fit within the company. Jay, the general manager, oversees the Aimtek facility, which also includes Bay State Surface Technologies. Rita, the company's CFO, oversees Atech.

Dave Bush, aftermarket supply chain manager for that division, has worked with the Kapurs — specifically Amar, Jay and Rita — for 16 years and calls them "great people."

"They turn on a dime," he says. "If you need something they're very quick, they're very agile, they're very professional."

For Jay, being the boss's son didn't provide him with an advantage. He wasn't afforded special treatment, washing and sweeping floors at the company while he was in high school before he began working full time while also a full-time student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (where, coincidentally, his father earned bachelor's and master's degrees). That, he said, "gained the respect of fellow workers."

Rita traveled the same track, doing general filing and office work before she earned undergraduate and MBA degrees from Bentley University.

With the second generation of Kapurs well in control of the company, what of the third generation?

That apparently is not an issue at this point. Jay has two teenage sons, the elder of whom just graduated from high school and is working part time at Aimtek before he heads to college in the fall. The younger son, 15, just began doing a little work at the company.

Despite seeing each other every day at the office, the Kapurs try to avoid letting work come in the middle, which is harder since they all live near each other and have summer homes on Cape Cod. That separation of work and family starts with Amar, his son said.

"He's really good about that," Jay said. Sometimes he reminds them when they're gathered outside the office: "Don't talk about business."

"Even though we see each other all day long, we enjoy each other's company," Jay Kapur said. "We're a very close family." ■

BY RICK SAIA

Worcester Business Journal Staff Writer

Over the 42 years Aimtek Inc. has been in business, only one facet of the business has remained a constant: The same guy is in charge.

That guy, Amar Kapur, has ushered his company through many changes: from what they make and sell to whom they make and sell to — as well as where their base of operations is located.

In 1973, Kapur and his wife, Ani, launched what was then a supplier of medical gases, respiratory and anesthesia supplies to hospitals and pharmaceutical companies in a third-floor apartment in Worcester. Just two years later, they moved the company to a 2,000-square-foot facility in the city. Three years after that, Aimtek was moved to its current location on Washington Street (Route 20) in Auburn. The Kapurs expanded on that site just seven years ago.

Those transitions pale in comparison to how Aimtek has evolved its mission and refocused its sales targets over the last four decades.

Kapur's original mission for Aimtek — serving specialty, niche markets — has never changed. But market forces have changed those specialty markets.

Today, the company's main business products are metals and alloys, along with an array of services. The chief markets: aviation and aerospace.

Different? Imagine McDonald's gradually

transitioning from serving burgers and fries in favor of pizza. But if your business is going to survive, those are the kinds of tough decisions you have to make. In Aimtek's case, its original offerings became less of a niche and customers' demands were changing, Kapur recalled.

For example, "when we divested our industrial gas business," he said, "it became apparent to us that it was gravitating toward" larger companies that could offer more of a "one-stop-shop type" of products and services, "which we

President and CEO: Amar Kapur

Generation in charge: 1st and 2nd

Website: www.aimtek.com

couldn't do then" without a global presence.

So, Aimtek has remained true to Kapur's original vision to be a provider of specialty, niche products. Once a product becomes a commodity with bigger, well-heeled companies getting in the game, Kapur finds a different game.

"That's the reason why we are successful," he said. "We will continue to be a growing company so long as we stick to those specialty (kinds) of products."

The key to adapting and thriving lies in listening to customers, according to Kapur. For example, "When you start losing customers and the commodity end of the products is going to