



ONTHEJOB

REBECCA A. MORGAN
President and founder
 Fulcrum ConsultingWorks Inc.

By **DAVID PRIZINSKY**
 clbfreelancer@crain.com

To Cleveland management consultant Rebecca A. Morgan, a manufacturer's decision to export can't be made in a vacuum.

A manufacturer with a marketing plan that includes a reliance on exporting should determine the implications of that plan for the operating side of the business. That plan will make demands on delivery schedules, production volumes, and product quality and design.

"Evaluate what it takes to execute the export strategy. It is more than contacting a freight forwarder," Ms. Morgan said. "The marketing decision to export has a significant impact on the day-to-day operations."

Making products for export, for example, can require producing certain volumes such as ocean container sized orders that will affect the normal production flow, said Ms. Morgan, who is president and founder of Fulcrum ConsultingWorks Inc.

"Figure out how it all works globally," she said. "What about the effects of international business regulations? How do they affect the operations side of things? Focus on what the international market is telling you it needs and then understand the impact on your operations."

Meeting the export market in the most efficient way also will bring

into play obvious questions that companies must answer. These include where to make the products and whether some outsourcing will be required, she said.

Ms. Morgan emphasizes "lean" manufacturing techniques in her consulting practice. These include just-in-time production, inventory reduction and the elimination of wasted motion.

She formed Fulcrum ConsultingWorks in 1990. She said her microeconomics background, combined with her management experience, give her the perspective needed to recommend practical operations improvements that companies are able to implement fairly quickly.

Ms. Morgan moved to the area in 1978. She lives in Cleveland and spends time when she isn't working following her favorite sports teams. She is an avid fan of March Madness. She said she finds her interest in sports a good way to relax.

She moved here to take a job as an economist with the former Cleveland Trust. She has degrees in economics and has held management positions at a variety of Northeast Ohio companies, including Stouffer Foods and TRW Inc.

"It doesn't matter if the product is macaroni and cheese or auto parts," Ms. Morgan said. "The operational issues involved are the same."

Although her client list includes large, publicly owned companies, such as Keithley Instruments Inc., an electronic testing equipment firm

in Solon, Ms. Morgan said she also enjoys working with smaller, privately held manufacturers.

"My typical client is a privately held company with sales of \$20 million to \$100 million annually," she said. "This is the type of client I like because they tend to be entrepreneurial and they can get things done quickly."

She said the decision to export is not the only issue that might require management to assess its operational strategy and shop floor procedures. Some of her consulting work has been tied to the need for firms to cope with rising raw material prices and the need for family businesses to adjust to changes in management when an owner retires.

Ms. Morgan said a collaborative style of working sets the tone for how she prices her services. She has a fee that is agreed upon for a particular project.

"I ask the client to determine what the project is worth to the company," she said. "We mutually set a value on the basis of that. I don't have an hourly rate." She said her business comes mostly from referrals.

This year has been a good one, more active than 2004 when some local manufacturers were coping with an economic downturn. "My clients are doing very well," Ms. Morgan said.

Charles Mintz, president of Neighborhood Manufacturing in Cleveland, turned to Ms. Morgan and Fulcrum ConsultingWorks to improve productivity and production line flexibility at the 25-employee company. "We were introducing new concepts, and Becky adapted the new procedures to Neighborhood."

Mr. Mintz said the results have been good. He said the company's productivity has increased 50%. Neighborhood Manufacturing, a subsidiary of Superior Tool Co., a Cleveland plumbing tool manufacturer, began making the changes four years ago.