



Grady-White Boats

Quality From The Start

Grady-White Boats got its start in the Old Star Tobacco Warehouse No. 2 on Albemarle Avenue in Greenville, North Carolina. The company was founded in 1959 by entrepreneur Don White and boat builder Glen Grady. The fledgling business offered two boat models—a 16-foot and 17-foot runabout. They shipped their first four boats in February 1960 and Grady-White employed 38 people at the time.

“The lap-strake mahogany boats developed a reputation for quality and seaworthiness. They were beautiful. They were functional. But, in spite of the boats’ appeal and acceptance, the company was in financial trouble within a decade,” explained Shelley Tubaugh, Vice President Marketing at Grady-White Boats.

New Leader Takes the Helm

And then, by happenstance, Eddie Smith who was working in the family business, National Wholesale, learned about Grady-White’s plight. Tubaugh added, “He acquired Grady-White and took the helm, making the decision to steer the company into a world-class manufacturing operation.”

Catapults Grady-White Catapults to Forefront in Boating Industry

True to his word, Smith did his research and hired the most qualified

Challenge

Secure grant funds to support a 70,000 square-foot manufacturing facility expansion

NCMEP Solution

Business Expansion Support

Benefits

\$500K grants; Educational credits for workforce training at local community college; 65 new jobs

engineering and manufacturing experts to set up an efficient manufacturing process. They set up a standard cost system that included time and motion standards to measure the efficiency of individuals and the boat building process. In 1968, while virtually unheard of, Grady-White hired a computer expert to design a materials requirement plan to keep track of materials. These tools, and others used in current day manufacturing operations, catapulted them ahead of the entire boat building industry. The company became more efficient and lean and started to grow quickly.

In 1972, the company broke ground for a new 150K square-foot facility, considered to be one of the most modern boat manufacturing plants at that time. "Over the next few years, we added on to the facility many more times, investing in the community and our people. We felt growing pains again in 2018," said Tubaugh. "We needed to create additional production capacity and more space to build larger boats, including our flagship boat, the Canyon 456 center console."

That's when Grady-White turned to the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), a partner of the North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NCMEP) for personalized assistance to address their expansion needs and coordination of resources.

Expansion and Addition of 65 New Jobs

Tim Ivey, Director of Regional Operations, Northeast Zone for EDPNC, got to work right away. He was able to find assistance for the project from several North Carolina agencies including the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Rural Economic Development Grant program, matching funds from the Pitt County Development Commission (PCDC) as well as funds for educational credits for training at Pitt Community College.

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NCMEP is administered by NC State Industry Expansion Solutions (IES) and is joined by partners from the North Carolina Community College System; NCWorks Customized Training; the Economic Development Partnership of NC; the Polymers Center of Excellence; the Manufacturing Solutions Center; East Carolina University; UNC Charlotte; and North Carolina A&T University.

“ In all, EDPNC was able to help locate approximately \$500K in grant money for our 70,000 square-foot expansion. With the expansion, we were able to add 65 new jobs ”

—Jill Carraway, Vice President of Finance
Grady-White Boats

“In all, Tim, via EDPNC, was able to help locate approximately \$500K in grant money for our 70,000 square-foot expansion,” said Jill Carraway, Vice President of Finance at Grady-White Boats. “Because of the expansion, we were able to add 65 new jobs.” “EDPNC’s assistance has continued long after our expansion,” said Carraway. “Tim continues to serve as a liaison in areas such as providing information about other resources the state has to offer. We are truly grateful for EDPNC’s support. We have learned so much from their vast experience and knowledge as they guided us through this process.”

Top Leader in the Boat Building Industry

Grady-White has come a long way since those days of offering two models of their lap-stroke mahogany boats. Today, they build 27 models of fiberglass offshore, sport fishing and family fishing boats ranging from 18 to 45 feet. They presently employ about 350 people. Grady-White’s 60-year track record of pioneering designs, leading craftsmanship, exceptional engineering and unparalleled customer satisfaction has earned them 17 out of 17 customer service awards from the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) Marine Industry Customer Satisfaction Index and makes them one of the top leaders in the boat building industry.