

Bertram Dental Lab:

Well-Established Cast Partial Lab Transforms into Digital Dynamo

Since augmenting its cast chrome RPD services with SLM frameworks five years ago, Bertram Dental Lab has been on a significant growth trajectory; the more recent addition of printed surgical guides is further accelerating that path. Consequently, after 40 years in its Neenah, WI, location, the lab needed more elbow room for its 75 team members and increasing number of SLM printers.

In October 2019, Co-Owners (and cousins) Tim and Joe Bertram purchased a defunct grocery store in an up-and-coming area of nearby Menasha. Over New Year's Day weekend, 2021, after a 15-month overhaul, they moved into the new facility, more than tripling the lab's total square footage to 22,000.

While they worked with a general contractor and architect, Tim Bertram was very hands on, doing a lot of the work himself. "I worked on the renovation nearly every day. Joe and our Lab Manager, Jeff Bur-

ton, ran the laboratory and maintained contact with our customers. I personally did every ounce of tiling, installed the bathroom sinks, all the accent lighting and mounted miles of wall organizers. Many others pitched in, including Joe's wife, Julie, and his kids who helped with all the landscaping, bringing in new trees and over 50 tons of new stone; Jim Bertram, our Finishing Dept. Supervisor and Jason Schreiter, our Facility/Equipment Maintenance Manager. It was a very rewarding but extremely exhausting process," says Bertram.

When they bought the building, the Bertrams did a full rebrand of the laboratory, including a new logo in white, black and lime green, a color scheme that's featured prominently throughout the lab. It has an industrial, modern feel with numerous high-tech appointments; for example, all the doors are digitally access controlled and open with key FOBs,

80% of the lighting is on motion detectors and there are more than 30 security cameras throughout the lab. In addition, team members have their own digital lock-

ers for coats, personal items and their company-issued tablet which enables them to communicate between departments via Microsoft

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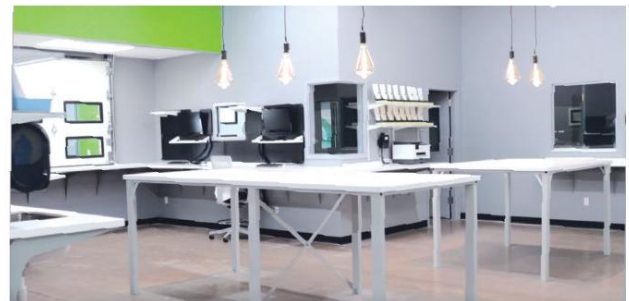


The 13-foot wall showcasing Bertram's logo creates a dramatic entrance to the lab. Tim Bertram installed each 3D black tile individually and the lime green logo color is carried throughout the lab. The sign company that recreated the logo on the wall received an award for it in a Wisconsin state competition. Team members (from l. to r.): Jason Elmer, Matt Gyrion, Karen Brandenburg, Sara Nelson, Joe Bertram, Jeff Burton, Tim Bertram, Tracy Wildenberg, Jim Bertram, Andy Timblin and Dan Brownson.

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The four flat screen TVs throughout the lab are used to welcome visitors, show recruitment videos during interviews and stream other content. On the right: the BDL History wall features published articles about the lab and its team members.



The lab has several different types of lighting. The big Edison bulbs in the shipping department (above) have a vintage look but use LED bulbs that add warmth to the room. Other areas have track lighting and every workstation has LED lights with three brightness and three temperature settings so the technician can control them individually. Since the new facility is in a different town, the lab changed electrical providers; the new provider offers lower rates because it generates its own electricity and projects the lab's costs will decline by 15%.

INSPIRING INTERIORS

continued: Bertram Dental Lab

teams as well as stream music.

Some departments—such as shipping, finishing, waxing and CAD design—have an open flow while casting, SLM printing and post processing are enclosed to minimize noise and mess. Two new features are proving to be especially useful:

1. Tall rolling carts that hold about 40 case pans used specifically for moving digital cases, most of which are printed from customers' STL files and are mod-
el-less. The carts save time because there's less pan handling. "Each cart is designated to one print run from one printer, giving us an easy system to ensure we have every part from that printer and things don't get lost," says Bertram.

2. Durable, black metal wall organizing panels are positioned at every workstation and in the shipping department. Each panel is customizable so the team members can move the shelves, pegs

and racks to meet their preferences and all the materials and tools they need are easily accessible.

"When we designed the lab, we knew we wanted to eliminate drawers in the work areas because they're dusty and hold tons of clutter. These panels are made by OmniWall and are marketed for use in garages but they work really well for our application. When we moved, we discovered so much money in forgotten tools and inventory in the drawers and knew we made the right decision," says Bertram.

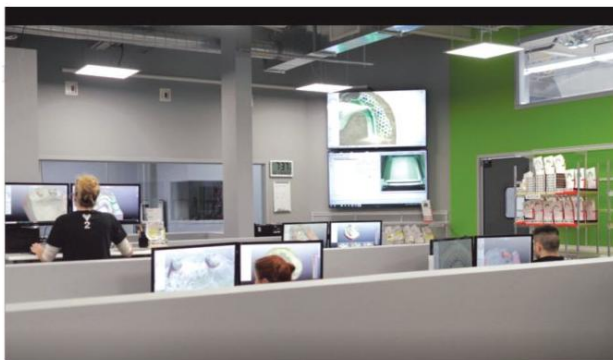
All in all, Joe and Tim have made a lot of right decisions. They welcome the additional space, especially for socially distancing during the pandemic. "It's a definite improvement over our previous location. Business has been really busy so we're happy to have expanded our production capacity to meet our customers' growing demand," says Bertram.



Bertram ordered this stunning eight-person conference room table from Etsy. It's made in Turkey from epoxy resin and walnut, both of which are CNC milled.



The blackout, design and waxing department. Each workstation has a wall organizer that's customizable so the team member can organize his tools and materials to suit his needs.



The CAD department has nine design stations. The inside of the build chamber of the SLM printer can be projected on one of the four 65-inch screens mounted on the wall, allowing for additional monitoring of the print jobs.

Three new SLM printers have been installed since moving into the building; here, a technician brushes off excess CoCr alloy powder from 3D-printed metal frameworks. One unexpected challenge of incorporating the equipment: while Bertram had allocated ample space in the printer department for the new units, unbeknownst to him the manufacturer recently made them three feet longer, making the room a little tight.



The BDL Wall of Dedication features photos of every team member with 10 or more years of service as well as retired technicians. Tim's wife, Julie Bertram, an Occupational Therapist, also loves graphic design and photography and handles all of the lab's design needs and photos. "She cuts our vinyl signage for the lab with her Cricut machine. She's amazing," says Bertram. For example, Julie made the signs below.



The lab's 20-plus soap dispensers make hand washing fun with humorous messages like these.

WEB EXTRA: For a video tour of Bertram Dental Lab, check out LMTmag.com/bertramDL