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## FROM BLAND TO BEAUTIFUL

DESIGNERS PAY ATTENTION TO A SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE

**T**houghtful design does more than take a space from bland to beautiful. Good interior design incorporates efficiency into the mix, too. And does so in a way that allows you to enjoy a seamless experience without ever knowing – or likely caring – what’s happening behind the scenes.

Nowhere is this truer than in the marine industry. Boats by their very nature are designed with most of their functionality never intended to be seen. Engine compartments, generators, and water and plumbing systems are very much “out of sight, out of mind” for the casual boat guest. Yet each is a critical part of providing for the comfort of everyone on board.

Even the more obvious design elements – like hull shape and seating configuration – are usually overlooked by the casual observer. People come aboard to have fun and enjoy themselves. A well-designed vessel delivers this with ease.

Of course, this thoughtful design does not happen by accident. Behind every great day on the water are countless designers and engineers relentlessly creating, testing, and analyzing data to improve the user experience. But it isn’t just boat owners and guests they think about. The marine industry maintains a laser focus on improving manufacturing processes to maximize efficiency, too.

One such example is Bennett Marine. Even if you’ve never heard of them, you’ve likely benefitted from their product – at least if you’ve been on a boat in the past 50 years.

Bennett makes trim tabs. These small, yet critical, items are what stabilizes a boat and delivers a smooth, enjoyable ride – no matter the water conditions. It’s also a technology that exists close to the waterline, so the casual boater isn’t likely to even notice the trim tabs let alone appreciate them. Yet without trim tabs, their day on the water would be a far rougher ride.

Which is exactly what Chuck Bennett experienced back in the 1960s – a day on the lake that took a dark turn in heavy seas. The experience was so frightening for Chuck and his family that once they all made it safely back to shore, he immediately went to work inventing a solution to

prevent it from happening again.

Chuck put his engineering knowledge to work and came up with his one-of-a-kind trim tab solution. For decades, his family business designed and manufactured trim tabs. Along the way Bennett Marine earned a reputation as the best.

But even the best knows there’s always room for improvement. Five years ago, after the untimely passing of JB Bennett – Chuck’s son and then-CEO of Bennett Marine – the business was at a pivotal point. As it looked to the future, Bennett realized it needed a partner to help improve production processes and streamline its systems.


Bennett found that partner with Yamaha.

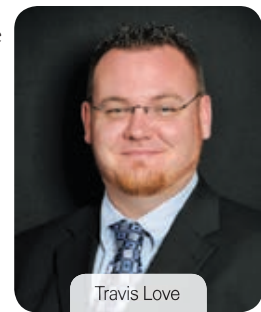
Yamaha liked the Bennett product and wanted to turn Bennett Marine into a premier level facility within the Yamaha portfolio. Yamaha’s goal was to develop Bennett into a model for continuous improvement. With a goal of reducing “seconds and steps” in the manufacturing process, Yamaha got to work right away.

They made a \$1 million investment, adding things like a laser cutter, robotic welding cell, auto deburring machines, and an electropolishing line to Bennett’s existing manufacturing line. This new technology allowed Bennett to bring all the work in-house and eliminated the need to outsource portions of the manufacturing process. It also cut down manufacturing time and improved consistency.

Yamaha put an equal emphasis on upskilling existing Bennett employees, many of whom have been with the company for decades. Yamaha recognized the invaluable collective knowledge held by the experienced Bennett team and wanted to retain that knowledge while improving on it, too.

As Travis Love, manufacturing engineering manager and a long-time Bennett employee, notes, “Yamaha is working hard to build and maintain a collaborative management style and culture. Employees have autonomy and respect. They’re empowered to get the job done with maximum efficiency using the newest technology available.”

The approach is working. Nearly all of Bennett’s 80 full-time employees stayed on after the Yamaha acquisition. Today, Bennett continues to work to continuously improve their manufacturing approach to achieve maximum efficiency. 



Travis Love



The Bennett Building

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MARINE INDUSTRIES OF SOUTH FLORIDA