

## Manufacturing & Distribution

### Training pays off as much as experience for Honey Brook manufacturer

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Aaron Beiler, a press brake manager, forms metal using a Trumpf TruBend press brake at BenCo Technology LLC. - (Photo / Jordan Bush)

Investment in technology, training and employees — as well as a willingness to train — is paying dividends for a regional laser-cutting and metal fabrication company.

**BenCo Technology LLC** of Honey Brook, Chester County, was started 20 years ago by local businessman Ben Beiler in a small garage ago. It then rented a truck bay before moving to its current location nearly 15 years ago.

Today, BenCo has 49 employees — about half of them from Lancaster County — and its two facilities span 65,598 square feet. Its second plant is in Berks County.

The company's products range from small brackets for local Amish playset manufacturers to large, high-end and high-precision plates for magnetic-imaging systems.

Al though BenCo may sound like the kind of place where an employee needs a high level of existing technical skills to work, that's not the case, said Kevin Southam, one of Beiler's first employees, and now a BenCo owner, project manager and designer.

"We enjoy teaching just as much as having the guys coming in with experience," Southam noted. "There's a place for everybody, because some of our best guys right now never even saw a laser before they started working for us."

Some of our supervisors had never even touched a piece of sheet metal before they started with us.”

In addition to conducting on-site training, BenCo sends employees out for a week or more at a time to train on equipment, including tube lasers, flat lasers and ERP software, Southam said.

“Training side-by-side with the experts that built our equipment and actually programmed our software, is hands-down one of the best ways to equip our team for success,” he said.

BenCo also takes pride in the perks it offers to employees, including paid time off to go vote. If you work the night shift, BenCo even takes the unusual step of buying your dinner.

Monthly lunches are another highlight. The meals allow Southam and other leaders keep workers up to date on company news.

Southam said it’s important not to get caught up in the next project and forget to keep employees informed.

That could hurt morale, so he found that a sit-down talk, and meal, with everyone the last Friday of each month was a great boost.

Food — paid for by the company — also doesn’t hurt, Southam added: “It didn’t take us long to figure out we can make this meeting light-years better by enjoying a meal together, and that the guys didn’t need to rush back to punch the clock because the entire meeting and meal was on us.”



### **David O'Connor**

Dave O'Connor covers York County, manufacturing, higher education, nonprofits, and workforce development. Have a tip or question for him? Email him at [doconnor@cpbj.com](mailto:doconnor@cpbj.com). Follow him on Twitter, [@DaveOC\\_CPBj](https://twitter.com/DaveOC_CPBj).