

# CM Pulling Strings

by Rebecca D'Amico

## One Time Lot Boy Bob Bourdeau Now Steers Eastern Boats

**CM: What is the nature of your business?**

**BB:** Eastern Boats manufactures custom downeast fiberglass boats from 18 to 35 feet. We specialize in building custom fishing and pleasure boats for the general public as well as many government entities including harbor masters, fire and rescue boats, research vessels, and the like. Our factory-direct approach has allowed us to meet some unique requests.

**CM: How Many Employees do you have?**

**BB:** We currently employ 36 full-time year-round employees in our 30,000 square foot facility located in an industrial park in Milton, NH.

**CM: What is your company background?**

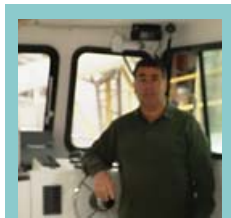
**BB:** Eastern Boats began in 1981 in East Rochester, NH. We expanded to a second location in Milton, NH in 1991 and were forced to move the entire operation to Milton after a fire in the fall of 1993. We outgrew that location and moved to the Industrial Park in 2000 building a new building in 2000, 2002 and 2003 to get to our current facilities.

**CM: How has it evolved from its beginnings?**

**BB:** In the beginning, it was just one model (an 18') building a few boats a year. We added a 22' model in 1983 and a 19' model in 1988. As we kept growing, we kept adding models to get to where we stand today with 14 models from 18' to 35'. In the beginning we were working out of a two bay garage and have evolved to today's separate fiberglass shop, assembly shop, and rigging shop—producing 120 boats last year. We have as many as 20 boats under construction at any one time.

**CM: How did you get started in the industry?**

**BB:** Personally, I started in the boating industry at age 14 at a marina as a lot boy, and washing and waxing boats. I became a certified mechanic before moving up to parts and service manager. I had the opportunity to go out on my own in 1989 where I experienced the retail side of Eastern Boats. After watching and learning the construction side, I bought the company in 1993 and grew it to today's level.



**Interviewed:**  
Bob Bourdeau  
President and Owner  
**Company:**  
Eastern Boats  
Milton, NH

**CM: What obstacles does your company face today in the regulatory and technical arenas?**

**BB:** As with any company involved in the composite industry, we face the challenge of EPA regulations for air quality emissions, MACT compliance, and hazardous waste disposal. We currently use low-styrene resin and gel coats in our production and are experimenting with other composites to try to reduce emissions. Other obstacles include increased pricing on raw materials, fuel surcharges, and increased health care premiums for employees. Currently, New Hampshire has only three health care insurers, which makes it difficult to "shop" for insurance premiums. We strive to be competitive in our employee benefits to attract skilled workers, but find this more and more difficult with rising costs.

**CM: What are your marketing efforts?**

**BB:** We currently participate in two of the larger boat shows in the northeast as well as advertising in the major boating magazines such as On The Water and Soundings. We are in the process of updating and revamping our website to be able to offer potential clients more information from the web. NESN (New England Sports Network) will be airing an upcoming television show Port O'Call, featuring our boats in Boothbay Harbor, Maine.

**CM: What development or research would you like to see happen to improve the industry?**

**BB:** Anything that helps us on the emissions side would be welcomed. Any development that might control escalating prices.

**CM: Where do you see your business in five years?**

**BB:** We are excited about the future. We are testing the dealer network for 2006 and see growth of our company heading in that direction. We are also adding two new models for this season with at least one new model planned for next year. **CM**

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## Advertiser Review

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Advertiser	Page#	Advertiser	Page#	Advertiser	Page#
Airtech International	67	Fibre Glast	67	Reed City Tool & Die	61
Akzo Nobel Polymer Chemicals	back cover	Flemings Textiles Ltd	38	Reichhold	33
Alcan Baltek	7	Frees, Inc.	31	Tricel HoneyComb	65
AOC	inside front cover	Hawkeye	53	Safas Corporation	45
Ashland Distribution	25	Henkel Loctite	49	SPE	64
Ashland Specialty Chemical	17	HK Research Corporation	43	Specialty Products	39
Axel Plastics Research Labs	9	Huber Engineered Materials	13	Structural Composites	73
Coastal Enterprises Company	27	Interplastic Corporation	37	The R.J. Marshall Company	31
Colbond	39	ITW Plexus	15	Valspar	3
Composites News	16	Magnum Venus Products	5	Vectorply	24
Composites One	23	NCC	38	Ventilation Solutions	inside back cover
Compsys	73	Net Composites	71	Via Mare	60
Crane Composites	61	Nida Core	12, 14, & 16	Zyvax	19
Elliott Company of Indianapolis	18	Norplex Micarta	59		
E S Manufacturing	48	Plascore	51		