



## 'Slow and steady wins the race,' says machine shop owner

By [Gary Hirsch](#), Inside Tucson Business  
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David Robles is president of Central Components Inc., a machine shop he founded and has led for 16 years. In some ways Robles personifies the adage, "slow and steady wins the race."

Born and raised in Tucson, he's never left. Like many small business owners, he has no formal business education but has prospered through intuition, good judgment and the ability to filter good advice from bad.

Growing up he knew he had a high mechanical aptitude. He recalls, "I took apart bicycles and lawnmower engines and helped maintain the family car." In high school Robles was the "A" student in auto mechanics. A teacher recognized his potential and sent him to a friend in the business of rebuilding industrial engines. Robles interviewed and was hired for a summer job, which grew to a part time job once school resumed and a full time job after graduation.

While many people flit from job to job Robles' record is unique and helps account for why he's learned his field so well. From graduation until 1992, about 14 years, he worked for one company, Industrial Component Repair, providing industrial repair for the mining industry. He recalls, "I started as a laborer, went into machining, learned assembly and testing and finally was promoted to the management floor."

Ever industrious, in the off hours he took on small machining jobs that his company was unable or unwilling to do. He credits his dad with instilling this work ethic. "My dad had a small construction company. Not finding steady work he took on smaller side jobs and took us with him. Dad was a hard worker. He never held a senior position but took his job seriously and taught us confidence and hard work."

It paid off. Industrial Component Repair was sold in 1992 and things went downhill quickly. "That's what triggered the idea for me to go out on my own."

Lacking formal business education, Robles knew he could build a business on his strengths. "I have a great deal of confidence. I had managed people, many of them older. Once they realized I was capable and not cocky my job got easier and things ran well. I knew I could do it for myself."

Robles' vision is clear. For years they've done commercial machining for local clients. He's building a stronger foundation to serve the medical, aerospace and industrial markets, which demand greater precision. In his words, "We strive for excellence in machining and manufacturing components to the most exacting tolerances of process and quality. We offer exceptional service and operate with integrity and our focus on continuous improvement drives us to pursue progressive advancements in manufacturing and machining."

To that end they purchased a new 10,000 square foot building and completed their ISO:2001 certification.

The shop is spotless with room to expand. Robles is determined. “We’re not going to be your run of the mill machine shop — we’ve got things in place that will make us different, better and bigger.”

Robles is quite satisfied with how things are turning out. If anything he regrets not pursuing more formal education. “I wish I had gone to college if only for the clarity that comes with knowledge. I’m a thinker and there are so many unanswered questions I wished I could have answered.”

He believes to build a business you need a thick skin. “You can’t let triggered thoughts block good decisions.” He listens intently, collecting information and then “stomachs” the decision; relying on a combination of data and intuition.

Though humble he realizes business takes drive and courage. “I’m willing to put it all on the table. Life would be boring without challenge.”

Robles has many long-time employees. “They enjoy the atmosphere. I realize the cost of turnover and pay very competitive wages for good work. I treat my employees well and they do the same for me.”

For fun Robles is the crew chief for a stock car racing team. “I like putting the pieces together. I like competition and I like winning. It’s spectacular. It looks simple, but there’s so much that’s never seen. It’s incredibly rewarding to be part of that team.”

To run the show requires patience and a lot of people skills — “more than I ever thought I wanted” he quips. It also takes patience. “I’d like to produce more but some processes take time. I pay close attention to product quality and to the quality of our conversations to figure out how people are doing. I’m very good at putting myself in their shoes to understand where they’re coming from.”

He runs the company with Flo, his wife of 28 years. “We’ve learned how to put together the finances and the business. We’re good at different things and appreciate the differences.”

If you want encouragement to start your own business Robles offers very simple advice. “If you’ve made the decision don’t second guess it and don’t look back.” It

worked for him. “I woke up one day and knew it was the last day I would work for someone else. I went into work, gave notice and was fired on the spot.” Other than occasional thoughts about further education, he’s never looked back.

Robles wants you to know, “If you require machining done to the most exacting standards by a local company you can trust and depend on, Central Components is up to the task.”

## **Biz Facts**

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