

# Glynn Barber: Portland

## Revving Up Area's Economy and Recreation

By Rebecca Patrick

Qualtech's state-of-the-art  
production floor.

Entrepreneurship was born out of necessity for Glynn Barber. In 1994, he and his wife Julie started Qualtech Tool and Engineering Inc. in their garage to pay off medical bills for their middle daughter. At first, it was a part-time venture in the evenings doing overflow work from Barber's day job at Yorktown Precision Technologies. When more customers came, Qualtech went full time in July 1995. Today, the innovative company – which employs nearly 40 and has 30 different customers – offers repair and maintenance capabilities, reverse engineering, custom design and traditional tool and die services.

Earlier this year, Barber's second business brainchild became a reality when he took over the rest of the industrial park in which Qualtech resides to construct the XPLEX Extreme Competition Park. While much of XPLEX is still under development, it opened for business in mid-May. Already, XPLEX has been the venue for several major music concerts and AMA (American Motorcyclist Association) motocross events, plus the UROC (United Rockcrawling Off-road Challenge) Nationals – covered on television by ESPN.

Barber sat down with *BizVoice*® to discuss both businesses and how they cross paths.

**BizVoice:** Compare Qualtech today with your vision for it when you started.

**Glynn Barber:** “We’re right on track with our business plan. I envisioned creating a work environment that people enjoyed coming to. Basically, you fail to plan and you plan to fail. I’m very goal oriented. I’ll set a goal, strive to reach that goal and then set another. I just don’t settle.”

**BV:** Talk about some of Qualtech's services and how you've found your niche.

**GB:** “We offer full production and machining services, but we also offer design and build of light automated equipment. For customers, we do aftermarket racing products, and we also do Caterpillar parts ... just a wide range of products. We (could, for instance) even make tool holders for a 25-year-old machine that happens to get trashed, and they couldn't get tool holders for it anymore.”

While near the Ohio state line, Barber says that approximately three-quarters of his business comes from Indiana, with Indianapolis being a viable market thanks to quick transportation.



“We are a hot job, need-it-now shop, so we’ve got a corporate aircraft (Cessna 310) that I fly. I can fire up that airplane and be on the west side of Indianapolis to service companies there within 25-35 minutes. I can service companies in Indianapolis faster than a lot of the smaller shops can that are already there.”

**BV:** What’s your typical turnaround time for a job?

**GB:** “If we service a company out of Indianapolis, Michiana or Fort Wayne, usually the turnaround time is 24-48 hours. That’s why Qualtech has continued to grow, and we’ve been very prosperous because we do provide that service for lots of major jobs. The typical turnaround for a company is 2-3 weeks.”

**BV:** Tell us about your workforce – its growth and where you find the skilled worker.

**GB:** “We’ve kind of hand-picked our employees. We’ve had to grow the business at a rate that we could actually learn to manage the business as well. We found a few people locally with the skills needed (toolmaking), but what we’ve done is also offered training programs. We’re giving them life skills, giving them realistic skills they can take anywhere, to any CNC machining facility. We let our employees know that there’s something in it for both of us. We want them to work hard, and then we also want them to learn as much as possible while they’re at Qualtech.”

Barber says initial training lasts six months to a year, but to some degree, training is “pretty much ongoing.”

**BV:** Are there any innovations that you’re working on or recently completed?

**GB:** “We just designed and built a center drilling machine to help us with one of our shaft products. With that machine, we went from 45 shafts per hour to over 220 shafts per hour! That’s one of my problems, I never sleep, and I’m always thinking (of what we can do better).

“We’re also developing several product lines, so our goal is basically doubling the company in the next five years.”

**BV:** You have one successful business – what prompted you to create XPLEX?

**GB:** “I’ve always been an extreme sports enthusiast, a motor head. I love racing and everything to do with racing. And remember that most of my business is aftermarket racing. I know that manufacturing in the U.S. is down. I took a look at where we were located and at my customer base at Qualtech and said, “What can I do to help our customers?”

“The city had 207 acres left in the industrial park. One of the things I could do was buy the 207 acres and turn it into the world’s only extreme sports mega park and motosports park, as well as create a retail avenue for my customers to sell their product lines.

“I also believed it would be great for the community, to have a year-round, family-friendly park that we can enjoy.”

**BV:** What about Portland makes it a good fit for the sports park?

**GB:** If you look at the demographics of Portland, it’s a unique community because of where it’s situated nationally. I looked at the 2000 census figures to learn how many people live within a 125-mile radius or two-hour drive of Portland; there are 11,084,000 people. That group spent 1.14 billion dollars on computers, 3.8 billion on education and 12.1 billion on entertainment and recreation. (Health care was \$12.5 billion.) So people like to play.”



A view from atop XPLEX’s UROC course.

*Continued on page 59*

## Indiana's Leaders

Continued from page 49

**BV:** What activities will be featured at XPLEX?

**GB:** Racing is the main thing. We have one of the top five motocross tracks in the nation. We have the largest man-made obstacle in the world for motocross called Mount Portland. We have the largest obstacles for UROC in the world.

"Paintball is also a major part of the park (later this year, the indoor and outdoor paintball facilities will open to the public and be the site of two state tournaments). Right now, we already have 60 modules just for paintball. We're working on modules for motocross, motorcycles, as well as for the four-wheel drive market. Another facet of the park is Xcademy, which is the only extreme sports training facility that is safety-oriented, and we're hoping to get accreditation."

**BV:** ESPN came to XPLEX to broadcast an event. When you started this, did you think the park would make its mark nationally so soon?

**GB:** "Yes, it's either go big or go home. We wanted to build a park that got regional and national attention because if we built something (solely) for the local people, you have to

understand in Jay County there's only about 22,000 people."

**BV:** What's the target date for the actual grand opening?

**GB:** "Probably not until 2007, but the oval tracks will open next spring. That's when we're going to have a job fair. Right now, we really have no idea how many employees we're going to need, but probably between 100 and 150. (Currently, XPLEX employs six in management).

"And, think of the residual jobs – restaurants, hotels, etc. I personally feel that this is very big for Portland, Jay County and north central Indiana. Some people would disagree, but they don't have the vision.

"We are located perfectly in Indiana and the U.S. for this park. We've got the right ground; great clay here for our motocross and other tracks. The park has just been a huge success so far. Everything that I had in mind to accomplish with this park, we've done. And we continue to set our goals and standards high."

### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** [Qualtech](http://www.qualtech.com) and [XPLEX](http://www.xplexpark.com) at (260) 726-6572 or [www.qualtechtool.com](http://www.qualtechtool.com) and [www.xplexpark.com](http://www.xplexpark.com)

**90% of industrial buyers and customers**  
use the internet to source for products, services, and solutions.

## Will they find your company?

Internet marketing is a proven strategy to produce highly qualified sales leads. Key Position will show you how to use this strategy to turn an idle website into a lean sales and lead generation machine.

**Result:** You will attract qualified prospects who are ready to buy.

**Call Key Position today.**

317.569.2250 or toll free 800.276.7959

Visit us online at [www.key-position.com/voice](http://www.key-position.com/voice)

