and a champion barbecue chef, which led to a refinement of the product and a glowing testimonial from the chef. Gap analysis compared features, benefits and pricing of substitute products, and a recommendation was made to conduct demonstrations at regional spring barbecue competitions and festivals.

Brand development included creating the Fireside's identity, such as product name, logo and tagline — "grill like you mean it." Design included a tri-fold product brochure and a Web site with e-commerce capabilities, and 3-D graphics, illustrating overt benefit, dramatic difference and real reason to believe. A public relations campaign -- blogs, press releases and article submissions to barbecue enthusiasts and commercial publications is to follow.

"One of the biggest things that SCMEP has done for us is to provide us with a resource to QUICKLY bring these product ideas to market" says Rick Mallett. They have assisted in all areas of marketing and we are appreciative of their work and confident in the results.

Testimonials
My first exposure to SCMEP was around 2003. At that time we engaged in some industrial benchmarking with them. Larry Jolly, the SCMEP area director, was most helpful at that time. We used SCMEP for conducting training in problem solving as well, always finding the organization to provide excellent training at very competitive pricing. The value has always been there. Our experience with SCMEP in the Eureka! Winning Ways program is no exception. Again, well done with excellent value. The nationwide MEP programs are an important link for manufacturers. I heartily recommend their use to industrial leaders, and I am especially satisfied with the SCMEP organization.

Steve Thies, President of Spartanburg Stainless

Eureka! Winning Ways helped move our process along dramatically, from looking at the tools used, to the way it's changed our thought process. It would have been difficult to launch the grill or head hanger within the culture of our organization without the Eureka! Winning Ways program. It would have been too much of a battle. The program helped enlighten some of our people in decision-making positions that could help move the process along.

Rick Mallett, Vice-president of Spartanburg Stainless

Another portion of SWM's plan - business case development - included identifying target consumer demographics and commercial business characteristics; product benefits; global demand forecast; communications tools; promotional support; suggested pricing and manufacturing capabilities.

SSP took a similar tact with the Head Lock Hanger Mounting Bracket. Market research into "big game" and "heavy machinery" mounting was carried out, ascertaining domestic and global potential for such a product. A competitive analysis of comparable products outlined features, benefits and prices.

Brand names were suggested and another tri-fold brochure was designed, along with a Web site featuring a 3D virtual demonstration. A logo was designed, press releases written, and a feature article was submitted to respected trade publication Taxidermy Today, which is to be published in the September issue.

Eureka Winning Ways leads SSP to new product innovation and market development

Client Profile
Spartanburg Steel Products and its sister company Spartanburg Stainless Products, collectively known as "SSP" began in 1962 as a sheet metal stamping operation for the Firestone Group. Today the company is a producer of Class A, B, C and deep-drawn stamping, complete welded sub-assemblies and major body modules for Tier 1 and Tier 2 automotive, and lawn and garden OEMs and suppliers, consuming 120,000 tons of steel yearly. More than 550 people work at the 620,000 sq. ft. facility on the SSP campus. In 1994 SSP was acquired by The Reserve Group, a private family-owned equity firm in Akron, Ohio.

SSP has always been predominantly an automotive dependent company, creating products in the make-to-order and assemble-to-order categories. The SSP motto was, "Send us a drawing; we'll develop the tooling and design for manufacturability; and we'll make your product." The Reserve Group urges all its companies to be innovative and become developers of proprietary products. This became a mandate for SSP as well. Its challenge was to add proprietary products to its core business.

Looking For a Pathway to Innovation
Like many companies trying to enter new markets or develop new products, SSP lacked a systematic, proven process for innovation and product development. Then Steve Thies, President of Spartanburg Stainless, saw an article on Eureka! Winning Ways (EWW) in SCMEP's The Edge. The article not only mirrored his concerns about SSP's current business state but also highlighted a process that could help the company transition out of this state.

As Alex Robertson, SSP's Strategic Business Development Manager, points out, "We started down the road to innovation by brainstorming. We had an internal innovation team that had been kicking around the idea of a high-end charcoal grill. But we realized that we didn't have a process or method for taking this idea from a concept to a product. This was one of the biggest motivators for using EWW. It gave us a methodology and process that everyone on the team could follow; it was based on demonstrated scientific data; and it was a comprehensive program that covered everything from what has the best chance of succeeding to who should be on the team."

Developing Ideas the EWW Way
Eureka! Winning Ways (EWW) is not a "brainstorming" process. It is an established pathway to developing the best ideas and taking them to market. Plus, it offers a unique approach to product development: Fail fast; fail cheap. Support is provided by EWW certified coaches who guide a team through the entire process. SSP's coach, SCMEP's Chris Wayne, was, in the words of Steve Thies, "a window to the EWW process . . . an excellent facilitator and instructor. Plus, he speaks the language of a manufacturing organization."

Developed in partnership with Doug Hall of Eureka Ranch in Cincinnati, Ohio, (EWW) is the first scientifically based
SSP assembled a team for the one-day Eureka! Session:

- During the initial Planning Session, Chris Wayne helped snapshot of the E!WW development process: people from accounting, production, engineering, sales and marketing – representatives from every part of the organization.
- At the Eureka! Session, the team was initially skeptical about the E!WW process, but suspicions disappeared as it moved through the fast-paced strategic-thinking exercises. EWW promises that the Eureka! Session will generate more than 50 choices for growth. The SSP team came up with 116 choices and from them culled four ideas for the next stage of review.
- These four ideas then went through a “Success Screening” by the E!WW Mervyn research process. This screening has an 88% reliability rating for forecasting an idea’s probability of success and quickly separates potential market successes from failures. Of the four ideas judged to have the greatest probability of success, two were chosen to be reviewed in the Trailblazer Action Plan: a charcoal grill/cooker and a compact utility trophy mount.
- At the Trailblazer Report-out Session, the team decided that both ideas were worthy of pursuit, but selected the combination charcoal grill/cooker/rotisserie to be the first product developed. The grill fits a growing specialty niche in the outdoor equipment market that will add market diversity and new streams of revenues for SSP.

New Ideas - Fireside grill

SSP is committed to establishing market outreach into the specialty outdoor equipment sector, specifically, a rapidly growing niche in the barbecue grill market. With more than $2 billion spent in 2008 on outdoor cooking equipment in the U.S., this is a fast growing industry. More than 16.7 million barbecue grills were shipped to retailers in the United States and Canada, and approximately 6.8 million of them were charcoal grills according to the Hearth, Barbecue & Patio Association. Market data suggests that it is the high end of the grill market—the one being targeted by SSP—that will experience the most activity with grill versatility being the top feature in this market.

Called the “Fireside,” SSP’s charcoal grill boasts a solid steel construction that saves time and money because less charcoal can be used to cook smaller portions. This combination grill, smoker and rotisserie has multiple vents and air-tight construction that allow grills to compensate for changes in temperature and windy conditions. Once the grill reaches a desired temperature, it holds steady. Adjustable, dual fireboxes greatly reduce cook times by cooking both sides at the same time and also remove the risk of costly flare-ups since the fat drippings never contact hot coals. The grill’s versatility makes it suitable for any type of cookout.

Within five months of the initial Eureka! Session, SSP has a Fireside prototype ready for test marketing. Steve Thies projects that the grill will be launched in the marketplace during the third quarter of 2009. Thies says, “SCMEP more than met our expectations on this project. We were impressed by the amount of preparation and the quality of the training on this initial EWW project. Plus the support of members of the SCMEP team was exceptional.”

Thanks to EWW, SSP has an established path to generating new ideas, choosing winners and taking them to market. “Now we have a process for innovation that we can rely on a regular basis to keep new ideas flowing” says Alex Robertson.

So far, SSP has produced 15 grills, to be sold by late July or early August in selective retail outlets in major metropolitan areas around North Carolina and South Carolina. Such stores include Signature Kitchens of Charleston, an award-winning firm with designs regularly featured in local, regional and national publications, including Better Homes & Gardens, Kitchens by Professional Designers, South Carolina Home & Garden, Charleston Living & Home Design and Builder Magazine. Signature typifies the sort of high-end appliance center likely to carry the Fireside.

New Ideas - Headlock Hanger Mounting Bracket

Also through the Eureka! program, SSP resolved to build a trophy mount originally conceived by one its engineers, David Fowler. The result: the Head Lock Hanger Mounting Bracket—the first-of-its-kind product to secure any exotic mount, trophy fish or animal head, no matter the size or weight. Essentially, it acts as protection for big-game hunters, fisherman and taxidermists.

The Head Lock self-adjusts to ensure there are no gaps or cracks behind the mounts. The patented bracket design also prevents side-to-side movement for proper alignment. Once equipped, all mounts can be interchanged quickly and safely, allowing hunters to vary or alter a trophy room in minutes.

Laboratory calculations have confirmed the Head Lock’s ability to support 2,000 pounds of pressure. The bracket is made from a high-strength low-alloy steel, typically used in the construction of tractors, automobiles, cranes, bridges and other structures designed to withstand large amounts of pressure. The Head Lock, which retails for $21, also connects to existing, problematic mounts, prohibiting further concern or costly repairs.

The bracketing system became available in June, and is already being sold by a pair of reputable distributors, Jonas Supply Company—boasting more than 100 years in the taxidermy industry—and Van Dyke’s Taxidermy Supply. Just this month, Jonas showcased the Head Lock Hanger at the 2009 National Taxidermists Association Convention.

Similar to the Fireside, SSP launched the Head Lock brack- eting system only a few months after the initial Eureka! session. “It actually started our product development process,” says SSP vice president Rick Mallett. “It helped move our process along dramatically, from looking at the tools used to the way it’s changed the thought process of some people here.”

Taking the New Products to Market

SSP paired with SCMEP and its marketing resource partner, a Charleston-based marketing company, to help bring the products to the marketplace. The campaign included several lines of approach to both the Fireside grill and Headlock Hanger.

First, a one-on-one focus group was conducted with SSP...