

Unique Companies

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We are continuously struck by the fact that there are hundreds, maybe thousands, of closely held, non-traded manufacturing companies in North America that offer unique products and services year after year, which go largely unnoticed by the general public.

These companies may never evolve to be the global giants like that of Ford, GE, Samsung and Dow, but they successfully contribute to society and to the progress of these large and other giant corporations: companies like Conversion Technologies Inc. (CTI) and Estron Corporation.

CTI, West Unity, Ohio

CTI has a plethora of applications for hot melt and water-based adhesives and coatings, largely applied to very wide rolls of various substrates (laminated), which are used for a wide variety of end-uses within the U.S. and Canada.

One of the most demanding products CTI produces is the customized Corvette automobile headliner. This product requires precise lamination skills, which must result in perfect “fit & finish” every time. They have been working with the Corvette headliner for five years, and will also make the next generation, which starts in August 2013.

CTI also supplies products into the construction, furniture, medical, consumer products, insulation, sound absorption and numerous other markets.

CTI is not your ordinary laminator. Many laminators coat rolls or sheet stock with adhesives, laminate layers of adhesively coated materials, and slit or die cut these finished systems. However, CTI performs all these functions in an integrated manner, thus providing a total comprehensive “package” that can be handed off to its customers.

While they can apply adhesive from 1 mil to 60 mils, CTI’s application “sweet spot” centers around applying coatings and adhesives onto a 24”-144” wide roll stock, running at 200 feet/minute, at greater than 3 mils thickness. That’s the up and running “sweet spot.” The differentiator that sets CTI apart from other laminators, and what is at the epicenter of its customer value proposition, is their integrated engineering problem-solving and adhesive chemistry know-how.

Being able to provide a “consultative” service for a customer as a precursor to an ongoing long-term relationship is key to the CTI success model. This ability, to assist a customer in its initial product design and final outcome is the CTI difference.

There are four elements in CTI’s offerings that intermingle and integrate to assure achieving the customer’s requirements, CTI’s differentiation:

1. Application engineering problem-solving and adhesive chemistry know-how.
2. Assistance in production startup methods for its customers.
3. Preproduction market sampling for its customer.
4. Full, long-term CTI in-house production.

For information about CTI, contact Chet Cromwell, president, at (419) 924-5566

Estron, Calvert City, KY

The company was founded in 1976 by Dr. Stan Skora, who recognized the promise of solvent-free coatings technology while it was still in its infancy. Of particular interest was the powder coatings industry, which was limited in its expansion potential by technical and performance issue.

Estron was and remains a specialty additive and resin company whose focus was developing products which would allow the powder coatings industry to overcome

many of these obstacles to its growth. Estron additives provided two primary solutions to powder coating problems and its inherent growth barriers:

- Final applied powder coating smoothness, and
- Eliminating frictional heat from constricting the free-flow of powder from the fluid bed through the feed tubes to the electrostatic application spray guns.

The first product line, Resiflow flow modifiers, was an immediate success and has since become an industry standard. Then, the first specialty wax, SBS-1200, was embraced by the powder coatings industry. Estron has subsequently developed many dozens of proprietary, high-performance niche additives and resins, making it one of the most successful coatings additives companies in its field.

The company has developed a strong global presence throughout the coatings market, particularly powder, high-solids, coil, waterborne, UV/EB curable and nail varnishes. As the company continues to grow, it remains focused on the driving forces behind its success: Quality, Flexibility, and Innovation.

Estron’s core competency lies in a combination of skills and abilities:

1. To have highly efficient marketing communications and develop strong industry rapport as a result.
2. To accurately identify both market and technical unmet needs.
3. To reduce the unmet need potential opportunity through a set of decision criteria screening and focus both technically and from a marketing aspect on meeting the criteria objectives.
4. To covet and maintain its current business while methodically considering new or adjacent market opportunities.
5. Focus: Constantly reminding themselves of their strengths and staying within them.

For information about Estron, contact Herb Straub, vice president, at (270) 395-4195. **CW**