

A COMMITTED CULTURE

CUSTOMER SUPPORT IS SECOND NATURE FOR PLASTICS INDUSTRY MACHINE MANUFACTURER GALA INDUSTRIES INC. **BY JIM HARRIS**



THE MACHINES GALA MANUFACTURES TYPICALLY ARE USED IN THE PLASTIC INDUSTRY AND RESIN PRODUCTION.

The key to Gala Industries Inc.'s success involves more than just manufacturing high quality machines. "Equipment similar to ours is made in other countries by different competitors, but where we are set apart is our technology and our ability to service the customer afterward, traveling to their site and personally helping them with their issue," Vice President Mike Dudding says.

The company's engineering staff also draws upon its experience to offer customers more than after-market service. "We can bring customers into our lab and show them how our machines can be used to process their products, and customers can talk directly to our manufacturing staff about the parts they're making for [customers]," President and CEO David Bryan adds. "We bring the highest total of years of experience to the table for the customer."

Customers are provided operator training and technology updates, as well as 24-hour technical support. "I'm proud of the commitment of our people unselfishly giving of their time to get products out to the customer," Marketing Manager John Roberts says. "That's in our culture and how we were raised. The commitment we have to the customer is like breathing to us. It's just natural."

This emphasis on service has helped the company keep the majority of its manufacturing operations in Eagle Rock, Va. This is important, especially at a time when many companies are looking overseas for their production needs, the company says.

Gala Industries Inc. is the leading manufacturer of underwater pelletiz-

ing systems and centrifugal dryers worldwide. Pelletizers and dryers are typically sold within an underwater pelletizing system but are also provided as replacement components or components to be added into other manufacturers' pelletizing line. Gala's large centrifugal dryers are commonly used by major resin producers in high-volume virgin resin production. Machines manufactured by the company are used in the plastic industry for applications including bulk resin and polymer production, as well as compounding and recycling. Plastics produced by Gala's underwater pelletizing systems are used in products including wiring, food containers, adhesives, medical tubing, automobile interior components, drink bottles and Styrofoam cups, to name a few examples.

MEETING SPECIFICATIONS

The manufacturing process begins immediately after the sale of a project with the creation of a job folder that initially goes to Gala's engineering department. Each project is launched at a meeting of sales, design and production personnel where all aspects of the project are discussed and all phases of the project are scheduled to ensure a timely ship date.

The engineering department completes the final designs based on customer specifications and needs, including production volume, electrical operation requirements, special materials of construction or commercial components, etc. Each project is assigned to a production coordinator who maintains communication with the customer throughout the production process.

"We have standard product lines, but also customize our products," Dudding says. "Some of our machines go out as designed, but there's also a mix and match based on experience and engineering requirements to run a particular customer's polymer."

Once customizations are taken into account, actual manufacturing begins. Fabrication includes laser cutting, rolling, sawing and bending; machining and kitting of parts and drawings for each assembly. Once the kitting process is complete, the project is moved on to welding to be fit together by Gala's skilled team of mig and tig welders. After welding, all stainless steel items are finished with a glass bead blasting process, then are moved to mechanical assembly. Next, electrical assembly will wire the components to meet the customer's volt- >>

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VENDOR FOCUS

Manufacturers around the world turn to Siemens Industry Inc. to meet their factory automation needs. The company is the leader in producing automation products including industrial programmable controllers, human machine interface systems (HMIs) and distributed I/O systems.

Siemens' factory automation business unit is proud to provide Gala Industries with many of the machines that run its production lines. "The controls we provide to Gala automate their equipment and solve the problem of having to manually operate their equipment," OEM Program Manager for Factory Automation Paul Ruland says. "We reduce their cost of doing business."

Siemens' SIMATIC industrial product line includes a range of programmable controllers, graphic panels, panel PCs and supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) software.

SIMATIC programmable controllers provide flexibility to manufacturing customers, as they can be integrated into any production and automation system and can be easily configured to work across different machines and handle different production lines. The controllers share core intelligence with more than 100,000 Siemens automation products. "We make the base design of the automation products very flexible and modular across many kinds of equipment," Ruland adds. Controllers are also available in embedded and PC-based formats and also feature built-in diagnostics, multiple-language capabilities, high speed response and long lifecycle capability.

Siemens controllers are engineered with user ease in mind, offering customers a number of advantages including a lower total cost of ownership, a reduced software engineering time through the reuse of code and creation of custom libraries for shorter system start-up times.

Siemens Industry offers customers 24/7 support and has stocking and distribution locations around the world ready to meet customers' needs. The company's global reach gives it the capability to meet a number of international electrical standards, Ruland says.

The company also offers partnership options to OEMs and can work with engineering and research and development departments on automation system implementation. "We collaborate with companies on how they can improve their machine's productivity," he adds.

For more information, visit www.usa.siemens.com/automation.

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» age, hertz and area classification specifications. When mechanical and electrical assembly are finalized, testing beings with a complete wiring check, and a run test to verify all electrical and safety components are operating properly. The equipment goes through dimensional checks, and this data becomes part of the project file.

The company's purchasing department works closely with its suppliers to procure needed components during manufacturing. Most procurement is done on a just-in-time, as needed, basis. However, Gala maintains some inventory on components that it needs on a regular or emergency basis.

Quality is maintained both on the production line and through the use of 3-D SolidWorks imaging software. "We've empowered all of our people to stop a product if they see any kind of issue with it," Dudding adds. "We don't want people to feel threatened if they have made a part wrong, so everyone does their own checking. We are a 100 percent ESOP company, so it is in everyone's interest to ensure we ship the highest quality for a fair price."

EXPERIENCE COUNTS

In October 1990, Gala's founder and major shareholder, the late Vernon E. (Buck) Dudley, contributed shares to Gala's newly formed employee stock ownership plan (ESOP). Dudley wanted to keep the company in the Gala family and not sold off to the highest bidder. Gala purchased stock a little at a time until 2003, when it purchased all outstanding stock shares to become 100 percent employee owned.

One of the company's greatest strengths is its dedicated, knowledgeable and experienced employee-owners. Gala's customers benefit through this dedication to quality and success. The company's greatest asset is its people, and there is very little employee turnover. There are people at the company that have been employed for more than 40 years. As of Jan. 1, 2011, 19 have been

GLOBAL GROWTH

While Gala Industries is proud to keep most of its manufacturing within the United States, the needs of its customers around the world have given it a global perspective.

The company long has maintained an engineering and sales location in Germany – where some manufacturing and assembly for the European and export markets is performed – and recently opened a location in Thailand.

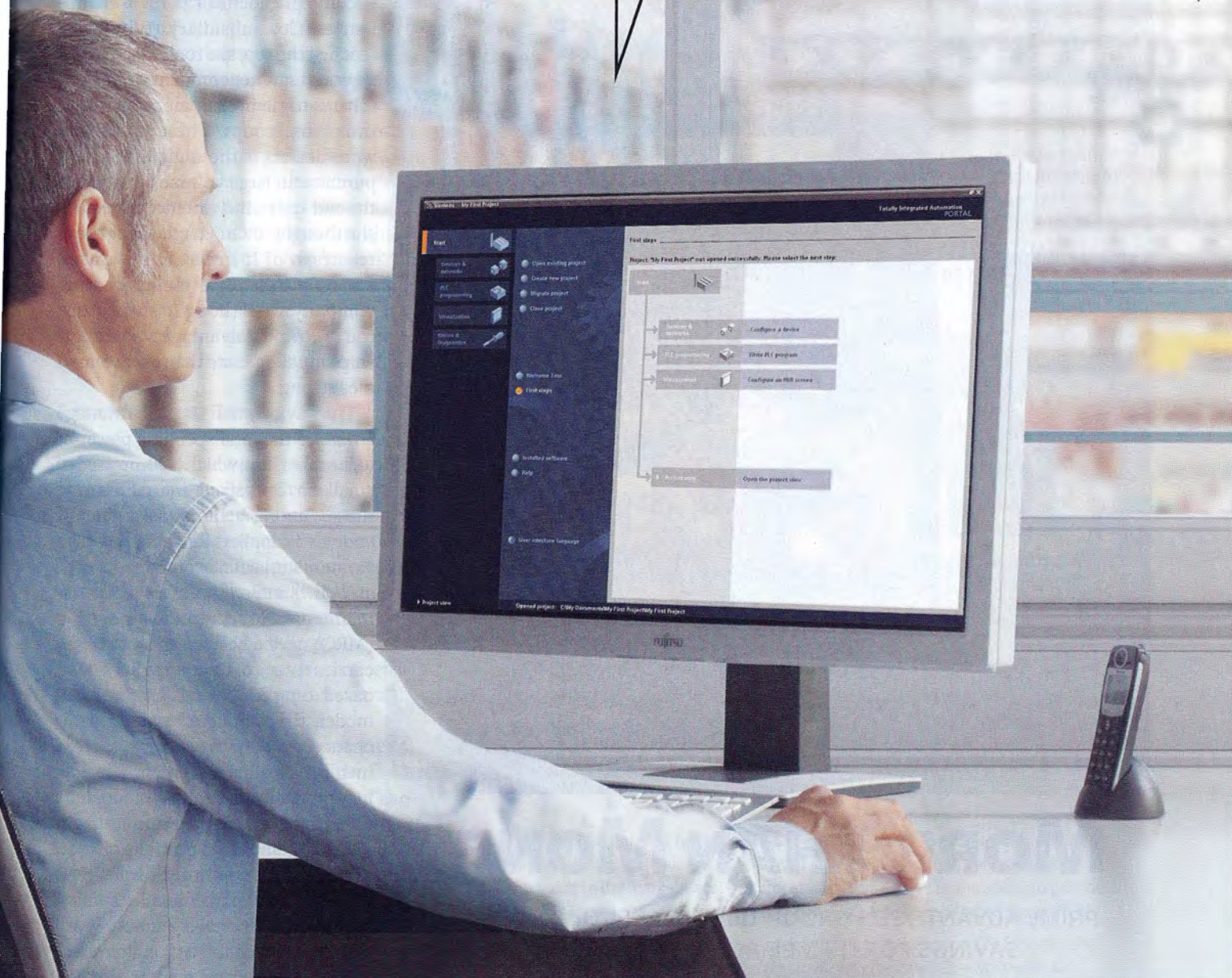
"We have a strategy of growth based on reinvestment in the customer," CEO and President David Bryan says. "We recently opened the facility in Thailand to support and serve our existing customers."

with the company for 30-plus years, 39 for 20-plus years and 58 for 10-plus years. The longevity of the work staff is beneficial for the customers, as experience and growth comes with longevity and the customer benefits from this experience.

Gala is a lean environment, no easy task in a custom equipment environment. In 2005, nearly every associate, as well as several of Gala's key suppliers, underwent training in lean manufacturing concepts and principles. By applying lean, Gala was able to identify waste throughout the company and by implementing lean, began to make changes and improvements. The largest single savings was the identification of waste exceeding 30 hours per job dedicated to locating materials. Establishing a kitting process of material gathering and changing the material flow to final assembly, Gala was able to reap additional savings. Gala's new layout of the manufacturing facility resulted in a reduction of 17 to 20 miles of unnecessary material handling per year. As a result, the company has been able to reduce lead times from 16 to 24 weeks per job down to 14 to 18 weeks.

"We've tried to streamline as many operations as we can and placed cells in certain areas," Dudding says. "We will continue to do that as we see opportunities to combine processes." **mt**

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