

KWS MANUFACTURING

www.kwsmfg.com / Headquarters: Burseson, Texas / Employees: 145 / Specialty: Conveying equipment / Bill Mecke, president: "We are committed to customer satisfaction."

SOUTH



MADE TO ORDER

ENGINEERING EXPERTISE AND EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE
HAVE HELPED KWS COME OUT ON TOP. BY ERIC SLACK

KWS Manufacturing has become a leader in the design and manufacture of conveying equipment for the bulk material-handling industry because of a commitment to providing high-quality equipment and service. Founded in 1972, the company is ISO 9001-2008 certified and strives for high levels of customer satisfaction and continuous improvement.

Based in Burseson, Texas, KWS has a 125,000-square-foot self-sustained manufacturing facility that includes a machine shop and steel fabrication. From there, the company manufac-

tures products that are marketed globally to many industries and a diverse customer base.

"We are in the middle of some continuous improvement projects that will expand our capacity and square footage, as well as allowing us to better utilize existing space while adding additional capabilities," President Bill Mecke says.

DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES

The company's customers include end-users, power transmission distributors, engineering firms, system

suppliers and original equipment manufacturers. The industries served by KWS include agriculture, chemicals, food products, lumber and wood products, mining, oil and gas, power, pulp and paper, wastewater, stone, glass and concrete.

"We've also seen a lot of growth related to the alternative fuels industry and have several big projects going on in that sector right now," Mecke says. "We are also doing more oilfield-related work, as well as doing a better job of penetrating our markets and seizing marketshare."

Its product line includes made-to-order components, engineered equipment, Conveyor Equipment Manufacturing Association (CEMA) standard components and OEM replacement parts. Made-to-order products include everything from

modified CEMA standard components to custom-manufactured screw conveyor assemblies with special abrasion-resistant hardsurfacing. Engineered bulk material-handling equipment includes screw conveyors, shaftless screw conveyors, belt conveyors, bucket elevators, vertical screw conveyors, screw feeders, live bottoms, drag conveyors, heat transfer screw processors and pressure vessels.

In addition, KWS maintains a large inventory of CEMA standard components. It can also produce OEM replacement equipment and parts to exact customer specifications. All told, the company can manufacture conveyor screws and assemblies from two-inch to 168-inch diameter. It regularly uses carbon steel, 300 series stainless steels and abrasion-resist-

ant alloys, as well as high-nickel alloys for corrosion resistance and aluminum if weight is a concern.

“We are finding better solutions for our customers, and we have a very rigid quality program and a progressive continuous improvement program,” Mecke says. “We can respond to customer needs quickly, and our work doesn’t end until the customer has functioning and installed equipment. Then we check with them to be sure they are satisfied.”

ADDING VALUE

The company’s products are used in a variety of applications and under a wide array of conditions. The KWS engineering team is capable of determining the right solution for its customers’ circumstances.

KWS designs conveyors for many

harsh environments, including corrosion- or abrasion-resistant, explosion-proof and temperature-sensitive conditions. In many circumstances, these applications require the system to be sealed from the exterior atmosphere and to be fabricated from functionally specific alloys. Because the KWS sales and engineering staff understand how to properly apply their products in a varied »

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Postle Industries Vendor Focus - KWS Manufacturing story

Ever since it was founded in 1970, Postle Industries has designed welding alloys and procedures for customers in an array of industries that either, push, convey, crush, shred, dig, process or drill. These industries include mining, forging tools, agricultural tools, recycling and the drilling industry. The company has set itself apart by committing its staff, research and manufacturing capabilities to the development of hardfacing products. This allows Postle Industries to help extend the life of OEM parts and rebuild equipment by solving problems such as abrasion, impact, erosion, friction, heat and cavitation.

"For most companies in the welding industry, hardfacing is a very small portion of the business," Vice President Chris Postle says. "But for us, it is now 100 percent of what we do. That makes us unique."

Postle Industries has two business units: Hardface Technologies and Hardbanding Solutions. Hardface Technologies is focused on engineering hardface alloys that improve productivity, reduce down time and reduce the cost of replacement parts by extending the service life of parts and equipment. Hardbanding Solutions is focused on solving the wear and tear issues impacting the drilling industry in the oil and gas fields.

"About 90 to 95 percent of welding is focused on joining things together, but we are the other five to 10 percent that is focused on putting on a hard welded coating," Postle says. "Our customers get the benefit of longer-lasting equipment."

Most of the company's business takes place in North America, but it exports about 20 percent of its business outside the continent. Although it serves a variety of customers, the common thread is the fact that all of its customers want to extend equipment life.

This is true of KWS Manufacturing, which works with Postle Industries to make sure its conveyor technologies will last longer and be more efficient than its competitors. This is a benefit to KWS's customers, who end up investing in longer-lasting products. KWS benefits from working with Postle Industries because choosing the correct hardfacing product, and applying it correctly, dramatically increases the life and the quality of its equipment, enhancing KWS's reputation in the process.

"KWS thinks about long term benefits," Postle says. "They want to serve their customers better by manufacturing longer-lasting equipment. We will continue to work with their engineers so they can make the best recommendations to their customers."

For more information, visit www.postle.com.



CREATING PRODUCTS FOR A VARIETY OF APPLICATIONS, KWS ENGINEERS CAN DETERMINE THE RIGHT SOLUTION FOR CLIENTS' CIRCUMSTANCES.

» array of industrial applications, they can design bulk material handling equipment that will provide a solution to satisfy customer needs.

"The type of work we do often requires custom-engineered solutions for our customers," Mecke says. "Our equipment is conveying products that are often powdered or granular. We have 10 degreed mechanical engineers and four professional engineers on our staff. That is more engineers than our competitors combined."

That engineering know-how is part of KWS's value-added services, which can improve plant processes while reducing maintenance and downtime and increasing profitability. Engineering services include system design, process engineering, process layout drawings, equipment drawings, general arrangement drawings and engineering analysis. The company uses state-of-the-art 3-D parametric technology to design equipment and provide layout drawings to customers. KWS can also provide structural analysis for hoppers, bins, silos, supports and other equipment.

Other services include process improvement, troubleshoot- »

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» ing and plant survey services. On the process improvement side, KWS personnel can observe customers' processes in action, helping to determine current process issues and find possible solutions. Troubleshooting services can help customers nail down issues related to equipment failure and provide long-term solutions.

Finally, plant survey services can measure and document all of the components and assemblies for the bulk material-handling equipment in a customer's plant. KWS can provide dimensional component and assembly drawings of equipment, and can manufacture and inventory spare parts.

LOOKING FOR MORE

KWS continues to look for ways it can enhance its operations. About a year-and-a-half ago, it invested in a new CRM software solution that allows it to better document every touch of the customer.

“That allows us to get better feedback from customers and to review it,” Mecke says. “If there are any issues, we can be notified immediately and solve the problem. Those are things that customers remember.”

APPROXIMATELY 90 PERCENT OF ITS PRODUCTS ARE CUSTOM-DESIGNED FOR CLIENTS, BUT THE STOCK PRODUCT MARKET IS GROWING FOR KWS.



The company is also investing in the support of its standard product offerings. Although around 90 percent of its products are custom-designed for customers, the remaining standardized stock product market is a growing area for KWS.

“We've built manufacturing cells for each



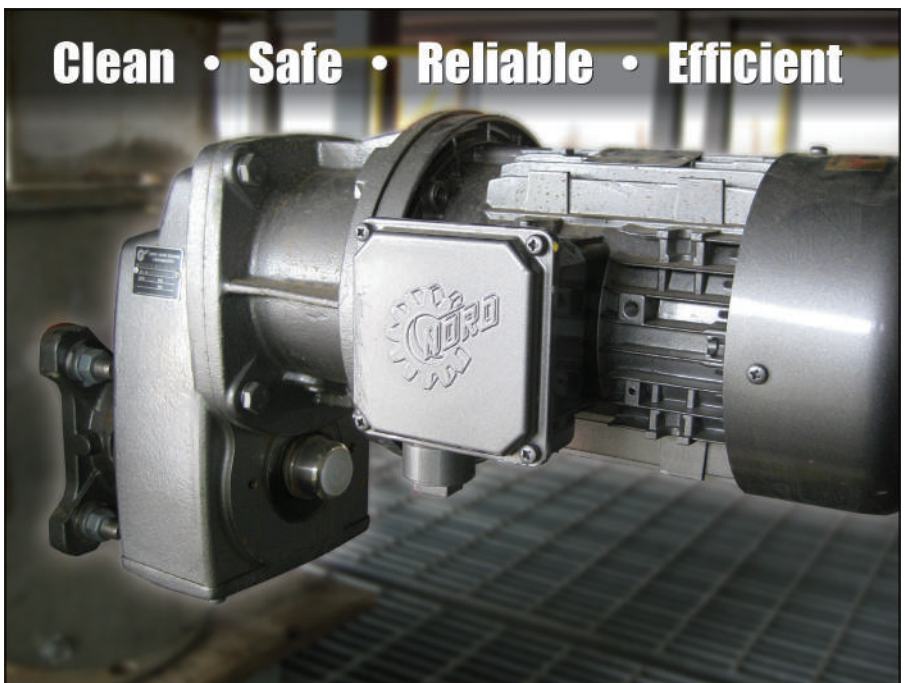
‘IF THERE ARE ANY ISSUES, WE CAN BE NOTIFIED IMMEDIATELY AND SOLVE THE PROBLEM. THOSE ARE THINGS THAT CUSTOMERS REMEMBER.’

stock product,” Mecke says. “That way, we can build the products in a short period of time, doing a lot of build-to-order instead of having to inventory large product quantities.”

Ensuring the quality of its labor pool is another ongoing focus for KWS. Mecke says there is a shortage of skilled labor, and KWS is working with local community colleges to help develop programs that can help to fill the void. Good pay, benefits, equipment and advancement opportunities are how Mecke says the company retains people once it gets them in the door.

Mecke says KWS still only has about 15 percent of its market, meaning it has plenty of room to grow. The company will look to build its salesforce so it can grow its customer base while also adding capacity so its sales efforts don’t overwhelm its manufacturing capabilities.

“We are committed to customer satisfaction,” Mecke explains. “We know we are pretty good, but we want to be even better.” **mt**



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