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# The KWS



# Advantage

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**K**WS works closely with its customers to provide industry-leading design and manufacture of products it completes according to the most rigorous specifications. KWS has a long history that has equipped it with extensive industry knowledge and expertise. The company has undergone two acquisitions since opening in 1972, and with each, a new era of growth occurred.

The first acquisition was in the mid-1990s and the second occurred in 2003. At the point of the more recent addition, company leadership made the conscious decision to introduce leaner methods and focus on continuous improvement to actualize KWS' full potential. By improving its processes, capacity and service standards, KWS has enjoyed an astounding five hundred percent rate of growth from 2006 to 2015.

The company adopted standardized methods and certifications to reinforce its commitment to quality, on-time delivery and cost-effective engineering solutions. By late-2007, KWS achieved ISO 9001:2008 certification for all of its sales, engineering, manufacturing and purchasing processes.

KWS acts in accordance with ASME boiler and pressure codes and the National Board of Boiler and Pressure Vessel Inspections (NBIC), making it the only conveyor manufacturer that possesses ISO, ASME and NBIC certifications.

As Bill Mecke, president and owner of KWS explained, "In our industry, it requires a lot of knowledge. There is a lot of theory to it, but there is also a lot of practical knowledge. We have a lot of good experience in our engineering group and in our sales group. They have likely seen the application before so they know how to solve problems associated with any application." ▶▶

*KWS Manufacturing Company Ltd. is a leader in the design and manufacture of conveying equipment for the bulk material handling industry. The company has established itself as a one-stop-shop that provides end-to-end engineered solutions. KWS brings value to clients from a broad range of industries by providing products of the highest quality that are backed by exceptional customer service.*



- ▶ The company is committed to its loyal customers and works closely to help them gain a competitive advantage from choosing KWS' products and services. For KWS, quality is defined by the client and derived from the complete customer experience.

KWS remains dedicated to the client throughout the entire process, from sales and engineering to manufacture and installation. Customers of KWS have access to unsurpassed follow-up service after the sale, with access to training programs when necessary.

**“Company leadership made the conscious decision to introduce leaner methods and focus on continuous improvement to actualize KWS’ full potential.”**

“The person who knows most about the project stays involved in the project all the way through installation, start-up, and we’ll go out and do the training. We’ll train the operators and the maintenance people, and if there is an issue, it goes back to the people that know most about the project,” described Mecke of KWS’ commitment to project management.

Mecke and his leadership team have invested in KWS’ people, bringing in project management professionals to bolster the company’s project management efficiency and professionalism. Whether the project entails made to order components, engineered equipment, Conveyor Equipment Manufacturer Association (CEMA) components or original equipment manufacturer (OEM) replacement parts, KWS will do what it takes to complete the job to the best possible outcome.

The company’s product line includes shafted and shaftless screw conveyors and vertical screw conveyors, single and multiple screw feeders, bucket elevators, heat transfer screw processors, batch and continuous mixers, belt conveyors, drag conveyors, hoppers, bins, silos, slide gates and structural supports as well as customized and CEMA parts.

KWS offers the most comprehensive line of mechanical conveying and process equipment in the industry. Paired with its vast range of services, the company’s exceptional level of industry knowledge and expertise enables it to provide an ideally engineered solution for any customer’s conveying or processing needs. KWS engineered products to incorporate principles that improve its customers’ plant processes and reduce the need for maintenance and downtime.



Customers of KWS include power transmission distributors, engineering firms, system suppliers, and OEMs that are representative of wide-ranging sectors such as agriculture, alternative fuels, chemical, food products, lumber and wood products, mining, oil and gas, power, pulp and paper, stone, glass and concrete, as well as processing equipment for environmental solutions.

KWS has adopted lean manufacturing principles into its operations at its 125,000-square-foot facility that boasts state-of-the-art equipment. The space and the processes are designed for maximizing output while saving costs.

The self-sustained manufacturing facility is complete with a machine shop and steel fabrication capabilities. KWS creates its products from carbon and 300 series stainless steels and abrasion resistant alloys. Assemblies can be as small as two inches in diameter or as large as 168 inches in diameter. For corrosion-resistance, KWS uses Monel, Hastalloy, Inconel and other high-nickel alloys, although aluminum can also

be used in the manufacture of products where weight is a design consideration.

At the heart of the company’s success is the team of 150 professionals who work with customers to meet exacting specifications. KWS’ employees have significant industry knowledge and experience to help the company to take full advantages of niches in the market. Many employees have been with the company for more than twenty years.

“Our people have a good, broad industry knowledge, and that’s what makes it fun. You get to work on a lot of different applications in a lot of different industries. That’s why I like it so much, and I’ve been doing this for twenty-five years,” Mecke said.

“We have eleven degreed mechanical engineers, and four of them – including myself – are professional engineers. We have a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge that we can offer to our customers in our many market niches.” From the sales ▶

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► team to the engineering staff, KWS is proud of what its people are capable.

In the last five years, through a focus on sales, KWS has increased its sales efforts with major power transmission distributors in the United States and as a result has seen a marked sales increase of five hundred percent. By maximizing the four Ms of lean production – method, materials, machines and manpower – KWS is prepared to continue growth.

“Any type of growth starts with sales, so we are focusing in on certain customer types and certain industries that have the largest potential for growth. We’re spending our money and our time and our effort marketing in those specific areas,” Mecke explained.

Another area of significant investment has been in the cultivation and fostering of a positive and inspiring work culture. In doing this, the company attracts and retains industry-leading talent. It has also developed its own talent through an in-house training program.

The company culture starts with a working environment where safety is of the utmost importance and where open lines of communication are encouraged. The comprehensive in-plant safety program at KWS is reinforced through safety training and education and upheld in accordance with CEMA

safety recommendations, standardized processes and established best practices.

“We want employees to enjoy working at KWS,” said Mecke. “We want to help them develop as people, whether that is personal or professional. We want to put a plan in place for the people who want to advance and take on more. Ownership and leadership want to work with them and help them to succeed.”

The KWS education program is currently training over 125 employees with 12,000 hours of training. The company has all of its welders certified to ASME and AWS standards and has received continuing education grants to invest in workers to help achieve this. These investments ultimately result in improved output and quality.

“We want to make it an enjoyable work environment because it’s part of the customer experience,” explained Mecke. “As a company, we have to be able to take care of the employee, give them everything they need to do their job and give them an enjoyable work atmosphere, and then that carries over to the customer.”

The company has created a scholarship program to support hundreds of local residents and to reinforce this commitment to education. KWS University offers bulk material handling training to end users, engineering firms, OEMs and power trans-



mission distributors to advance the bulk material handling industry. The industry represents a multi-billion dollar market with great future potential.

KWS also offers workers a retirement program as a means of sharing the profits with its employees. The generous program matches employee contributions, as determined by the profitability of the company. “Any employee that is willing to invest in their future will realize a significant boost from KWS profitability.”

KWS invests in the future of the company, its people and the community of which it is a part. As one of the largest employers in Burleson, Texas, the KWS Cares program gives back to employees and the community in times of need. KWS Cares is currently undertaking initiatives with Meals on Wheels and the local child advocacy centre.

“The town we are closest to is Burleson, Texas. It’s a town of about 40,000 people, and we’re very active. We are one of the

largest employers in the town and in the county. We have a duty since we’re such a big part of the community. We want to give back,” Mecke said of KWS’ community outreach and charity efforts.

**“KWS offers the most comprehensive line of mechanical conveying and process equipment in the industry.”**

KWS has a clear vision for the future. Although it already offers one of the most complete product lines on the market, the company plans to develop new products and services to add to its already robust portfolio. This will enable KWS to remain at the forefront of the industry while finding new ways to take advantage of a multi-billion dollar market with untapped potential.

Acknowledging that KWS only controls fifteen percent of its market, the leadership team at KWS has positioned the company for continued growth in the bulk material handling and conveying industry. ■



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