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THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SLUMP IN THE UNITED States and the weak dollar against the euro and pound pose great difficulties for many companies. But not Hoist Liftruck, whose business looks to grow this year. For Hoist Liftruck, a manufacturer of large capacity forklifts, the weak dollar is a major advantage and one that has helped the company to export more of its products.

The majority of all off-highway vehicles made in the world and the bulk of the component parts used to produce them (transmissions, axles, steel, hydraulics, etc.) originate from the Midwest United States in close proximity to Hoist Liftruck, located in Bedford Park, Ill. This enables Hoist Liftruck to obtain materials locally without high shipping costs. Because material prices across the globe are consistent, this cost savings ultimately is passed through to the customer. "Labor only makes up 9 percent of our finished product, and shipping costs make up 10 percent," says Marty Flaska, President. "What that means is that labor is not a major cost of our products; it's materials, and that enables us to produce high-quality products at a highly competitive cost."

ROOTS LIE DEEP

The history of Hoist Liftruck begins in 1893 with the Elwell Parker Electric Company and in 1918 with Silent Hoist & Crane, whose technology and assets were acquired by Hoist Liftruck in 2000 and 1994, respectively.

Elwell Parker, one of the innovators of electric-

powered trucks, manufactured industrial trucks to handle cargo and other materials. Over the years, it expanded its line to include pallet trucks capable of moving cargo to various heights, thus creating the origins of the modern day forklift. In the mid-1990's, the company was sold and renamed Elwell Parker Ltd. and then sold again to Hoist Liftruck. Two of Elwell Parker's chief engineers are now head engineers of Hoist Liftruck, and Hoist Liftruck provides continued service and parts support for Elwell Parker trucks.

Silent Hoist & Crane produced heavy duty material handling equipment, and its products moved most of the cargo in the port of New York, the main seaport in North America in the early 1920s. In 1994, Flaska purchased the rights to manufacture cushion-tire forklifts from Silent Hoist & Crane. Shortly thereafter, Silent Hoist & Crane closed its operations.

These acquisitions comprise a big part of Hoist Liftruck, but the company really traces its origin to Forklift Exchange, founded by Flaska in 1980. This company bought and sold used material handling equipment and provided service and parts for the equipment. Flaska combined the technology,

MOVING THE GOODS



HOIST LIFTRUCK MANUFACTURES HEAVY-DUTY LIFTING PRODUCTS ENGINEERED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ANY INDUSTRY. JANICE GABLE BASHMAN REPORTS.



Pictured: The Neptune Series handles boats weighing as much as 55,000 pounds, transporting them in and out of rack storage.



service, and attitude of the companies he admired into Hoist Liftruck, a company whose products are 100 percent American made.

MADE IN THE USA

Hoist Liftruck manufactures its products in a 500,000-square-foot facility on 28 acres and employs 300 people. It produces six different series of products. In cushion-tire forklifts, the Titan Series handles 18,000-22,000 pounds; the FKS Series handles 23,000-100,000 pounds, and the Lazer Electric Series handles 15,000-100,000 pounds. The P-Series pneumatic-tire forklifts handles 22,000-100,000 pounds, and the Neptune Marina Series handles 15,000-55,000+ pounds. Between 2009 and 2010, the company plans to launch its loaded container handler line and RTG line (rubber tire gantry) for the marina market.

"If you look ahead at 2014, the Panama Canal will be widened and deepened to accommodate 14,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units)," Flaska says. "When that happens, all of the gulf ports and east coast ports will grow, so Georgia and Virginia could see as much as a 25 percent growth in one year. Ports like Manatee, in Florida, are investing millions to get ready for 2014 because in the long-term it will be significantly cheaper to move freight closer to the customer through the Panama Canal rather than transport it by rail or truck. Ports all over the world are already getting a lot more freight volume because gas is so expensive. Our new products – the Neptune Series, which moves boats in and out of the water, and stores them in dry stack buildings, and the Rubber Tire Gantry and Straddle Carriers, hybrid diesel/electric vehicles, which are eight times more efficient than regular forklifts and designed specifically for ports – will service that niche market."

The company manufactures approximately 250 units per year, with plans to increase its output by 40 percent over the next few years, with all the machining, welding, assembly, wiring, and plumbing done on site. It spent approximately \$4 million in the past two years on CNC machinery (used to manufacture parts) for its factory, and most of its CNC machines are only one to three years old.

KEM EQUIPMENT

KEM Equipment Inc. offers a line of 1.6 to 8.1 L gasoline, LPG, natural gas and dual-fuel industrial engines. We've received EPA/CARB certification for the 1.6 thru 5.7 Litre engines, for which KEM is the manufacturer of record (MOR).

From engines to Marine Jet drives to parts and accessories, Kem Equipment continues to drive the industry forward with technologies that outpace and out think the competition at every turn.



UNIQUE MONITORING

An innovative feature incorporated into most of Hoist Liftruck's products is RemoteTech™, a vehicle management system that enables the operator to customize vehicle functionality. It also monitors all equipment functions such as the engine, oil pressure, filters, transmission, vehicle impact, overload, hydraulic pressure, coolant temperature, battery charge, tire pressure, etc. and notifies the operator of any issue on a display inside the cab. The system then notifies the operator via digital display inside the cab and also sends an automated e-mail notification to authorized personnel informing them of any problems. "It's an amazing system," says Dan Peter, Director of Marketing. "Other forklift companies have systems similar to ours that record certain activities on the forklift, but ours is advanced in that we do our own programming, and the remote function/feature is only provided by Hoist. This function allows the parameters for each function to be set and changed remotely via modem, directly via laptop computer or right from the digital display inside the cab on newer models."

Flaska adds, "RemoteTech™ has saved companies significant costs in service and parts, as well as money lost on downtime. We've been able to accommodate a majority of customer requests by just dialing into the vehicle and remotely adjusting the parameters. Diagnosing problems is also quicker because all the information is stored in the system and can be quickly retrieved."

CONTINUALLY DEVELOPING

Fifteen engineers work full-time to research and develop innovative products and designs for Hoist Liftruck, and the company invests \$4 million a year into the research and development associated with those new products. The company implemented Lean Manufacturing to cut waste in labor and material and to help make it more competitive, which lowers the cost per unit.

The company also reduced the number of vendors it conducts business with by 50 percent and put a system in place five years ago to help manage its inventory better. This system ties the company's bills into its inventory and helps consolidate the vendor base. "One hundred percent of our vendors today are within 200 miles of our factory where 10 years ago they were all around the world," Flaska says. "We were faced with delivery times that were months long, where today we are talking about days."

Hoist Liftruck is known for its superior service, short deliveries on a majority of its models (between eight to 12 weeks), and its innovative features such as the RemoteTech™. The company prides itself on delivering a high-quality product faster than its competitors (by many months) and offering better service through



Pictured above: The P-Series is built to withstand some of the most rugged conditions and applications in the world.

an established dealer network. "I run a very flat company," says Flaska. "My customers don't have to go through five or six or even seven people to get an answer. They get it quickly and within minutes." Hoist provides parts and service support 24 hours a day and in most cases delivers parts the same day.

"The response to our products has been tremendous," Flaska says. "And we look forward to continuing and establishing strong relationships with many wonderful customers." With over 100 years of proven and reliable engineering, Hoist Liftruck seems destined to remain a fixture in the heavy lifting equipment industry. 🌐