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The Professional Muffler Shop Magazine

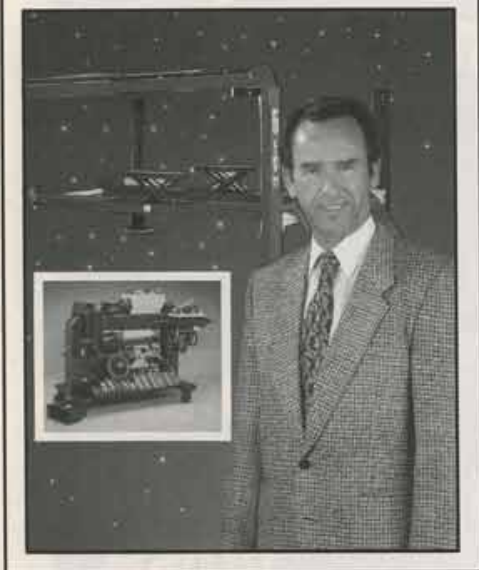
NEWS

January 15, 1992



Bend-Pak Positive About Future • Muffler Shop A Family Affair • Meet Mr. Nobody

COVERSTORY



BEND-PAK— DURABLE PRODUCTS, INNOVATIVE THINKING

The Company Is Positive
About Its Products,
Its People, and
the Exhaust Industry

by Donna Hobbs and Jim Kelleher

How do you stay on top in a competitive industry during tough economic times? Bend-Pak believes in bringing superior design to user-friendly products.

"The exhaust industry is alive and well, and bender sales remain solid," says Don Henthorn, founder and President of Bend-Pak, Inc. Don believes that the exhaust industry, while changing, is not declining.

"This is a very viable industry. As the market changes, we will change with it. We invest a great deal of time and money to help meet the needs of our market."

We recently visited Don and his enthusiastic crew at the company's Moorpark, California, facility. Don, who has been in manufacturing for more than 25 years, had his first prototype benders operating in the fall of 1978. In January 1980, a group of Bend-Pak people brought their new, bright-burgandy tube bender to the Exhaust Systems Professional Association Show in St. Louis to introduce it to the automotive exhaust industry. They were confident about their new product because every feature on the bender was the result of suggestions from technicians who make their living installing exhaust systems.

Since then, the company has greatly expanded its bender line, added lifts, and enlarged its manufacturing facilities while maintaining the small-company care and attention to detail that result in solid craftsmanship and durable products.

"We have been in a growth pattern since the company was founded, and we are still growing," said Don. "We have a positive attitude about this market and about our company's future. Each year has been better than the last, and we have captured more and more market share. This past year has been one of our best; sales are up 15%, and we are shipping products as fast as we can build them. There are no 'sleepers' in our line; every bender and lift coming off the assembly line has a destination tag attached."

Ginger Henthorn has played a vital role in the development of the company. Don proudly points to her accomplishments.

"She handles multiple tasks and has been a tremendous help to me by relieving me of a great deal of the burden of running the company. We would not be where we are today had she not been willing to contribute her time and talents. She remains a great asset to the company and to day-to-day operations."

The company now manufactures eight different models of benders and more than 20 models of above-ground lifts. The first Bend-Pak bender featured a digital control panel, and that unique Bend-Pak fea-

ture remains a popular part of the current line of Bend-Pak benders.

"Benders will remain a strong and consistent source of sales," said Jay Molder, the company's Vice President and General Manager. Jay, who has been with the company since 1978, started as a shop foreman and, according to Don, has done an outstanding job of organizing the company.

"Because Bend-Pak has been around for a long time, the company and its products have gained national credibility," explained Jay. "We have a reputation for making quality, trouble-free equipment. And our distributor network enables us to provide everything from advice over the phone to on-site installation and equipment maintenance."

"Satisfied customers are proving the adage, Once tried, always preferred," stated Don. "Ever since we first introduced our digital bender at the 1980 E.S.P.A. show, we have been experiencing growth, and we continue to improve the quality



Don and Ginger Henthorn head Bend-Pak operations from the company's headquarters in Moorpark, Calif.

and operating features of our equipment. Since 1980, our digital bender has undergone changes in function controls and memory capacity and has evolved to what it is today. It still remains a popular part of our line and is the only successful digital machine on the market," explained Don. "Our products are in use all over the world, and the Bend-Pak name speaks for itself."

With the exception of electrical components and hydraulic cylinders, all parts are manufactured at the Moorpark facility. "We produce

all the parts for our benders and lifts in-house," said Jay. "This enables us to maintain quality control and provide timely delivery of our products. We start with the raw materials, machine the parts, weld, paint, and test in our manufacturing plant."

Bend-Pak began building above-ground lifts in 1984 in response to customers' requests. "Lifts have been good to us and have expanded our market to other segments of the automotive industry," said Jay.

The first lift introduced by Bend-Pak was a four-post lift. The company now manufactures a complete range of lifts, including two-post, alignment lifts, and heavy-duty truck lifts.

"We entered the lift market because our customers were asking where they could get above-ground lifts," explained Don. "We now supply lifts that perform a variety of services, and we continue to offer new features. An example is our free-wheel, four-post lift with built-in retractable pads that can lift a vehicle off its wheels. This allows



Vice President and General Manager Jay Molder takes a moment at his desk to confer with a customer.



Digital Controls are a unique feature of Bend-Pak benders.



Jeff Kritzer, National Sales Manager, has organized sales in the field and set up a network of distributors.

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muffler shops to diversify into other areas of service like brake and wheel work or suspension repair."

The quality of Bend-Pak's products are evident in the available safety and convenience features built into their lifts. For example, four-post lifts come equipped with a push button lock system and non-skid runways that allow vehicles to be safely positioned during the slippery winter months. "Our alignment lifts were among the first on the market to incorporate self-leveling runways, which eliminates the need for time consuming level legs," said Jay.

Customer service has always been a priority at Bend-Pak. Al-

though work responsibilities are clearly defined, everyone in the office is experienced in customer service. "We are flexible to the changing needs of the market. The people here know the important role a bender or lift plays in the operation of a shop and are trained to respond as quickly and professionally as possible," said Jay. "We are constantly striving to be receptive to the needs of our customers and looking for new and improved techniques that will enable us to better serve them."

"If a customer has a problem we can usually talk them through it, but if on-site service is required we can provide that service throughout the United States," said Jeff

Kritzer, Bend-Pak's National Sales Manager. Jeff, who began in shipping and receiving, has organized a network of distributors and service centers to enhance Bend-Pak's overall service capacity. "If a replacement part is required, we can ship it overnight if necessary. We maintain a complete inventory of replacement parts for our equipment, which eliminates unnecessary downtime for our customers."

"The company trains our employees constantly. By keeping all personnel involved in service, sales persons included, there is never a situation that can't be handled."

The company has not forgotten where all the quality begins. "We have a terrific crew," said Jay. "Ev-



Exhaust News Photo

Sales Representative Craig Haggmark has been associated with Bend-Pak for nine years.



Exhaust News Photo

Velia Lee, Director of Export Sales and Marketing, aids the company's push into foreign markets.



Exhaust News Photo

Shop Foreman Gary Henthorn uses numerical control machine to machine parts for lifts.



Exhaust News Photo

Accountant Tessa Zeller keeps smiling while she keeps the books balanced.

everyone pitches in and helps one another when it's needed. We work as a team."

According to Jay, "We not only work well together, we socialize together. We feel that it's important for employees to have mutual respect for one another and to enjoy a certain camaraderie."

Jeff noted that employees often play team volleyball together. Employees also take to the ski slopes together when the snow comes.

The first voice most callers to the company hear is that of Receptionist Cheryle Rijkschroeff. She has been with the company for four



Exhaust News Photo

Production Control Manager Javier Arias and assembler Pedro Sanchez inspect lift components.

years and greets customers with her winning smile.

Craig Haggmark, Sales Representative has been associated with Bend-pak for nine years. First introduced to Bend-Pak while employed by an industrial supplier, he remembers selling parts for the company's early developmental machines. Craig has been a valuable asset to the sales department since joining the company.

Accountant Tessa Zeller, who is busy raising a new seven-month old son, has been with the company two years. She works closely with Denice Wagnier in accounts re-



Exhaust News Photo

Denice Wagnier keeps things moving in Accounts Receivable.

ceivable, who has also been with the company for two years.

Velia Lee, Director of Export Sales and Marketing, has been with the company for three years and speaks three foreign languages. She has a busy schedule and often finds herself dealing with customers in all corners of the world.

Production Control Manager Javier Arias has been with the company for five years. He enjoys playing soccer in his spare time, but that's scarce these days, because Javier and his wife have a new baby.



Exhaust News Photo

Jose Garcia, Alberto Martinez, and Juan Arias prepare benders for the paint booth.



Exhaust News Photo

Welders work to assemble lifts. Bend-Pak's lift business has grown as muffler shops have expanded into brake and alignment service.

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Don's son Gary, whose hobby is flying, started working part time at the plant at age twelve. He joined the company full time after graduation and is now Shop Foreman.

Don is proud of the company that he and his people have built. He singles out the contributions of Jay Molder and Jeff Kritzer. Don said, "I could not hold anyone in higher

regard than I do these young men."

Don Henthorn and Bend-Pak are positive about the exhaust industry and positive about their products.



Exhaust News Photo

Receptionist Cheryle Rijkschroeffe greets visitors with her friendly smile.



Exhaust News Photo

Don Henthorn takes a moment to check operations in the machine shop while Jay Molder and Gary Henthorn discuss procedures.