

THE NEW

July 1987

Undercar DigestTM

Hot Rod Muffler Digest

The Cost of "CATS" ■

Give It The Boot ■

Rebuilt Brakes ■



Pend-Pak's Market Prescript

Bend-Pak Continues To Diversify **Old Style, New Directions**

*Armed With Its Own Winning Formula,
Bend-Pak Pursues New Undercar
And Underhood Markets*

PROLOGUE

In the quiet community of Moorpark, CA, Bend-Pak Inc. is methodically marching to the beat of its own drummer. Although it's one of the newer companies in the bender business, this unpretentious outfit has been steadily building its reputation — and its market share.

Some say the bender business is dying. Bend-Pak management doesn't agree! They are very bullish on the bender business. However, they are also strengthening themselves by diversifying.

Some say that the work ethic is a dying American tradition. Perhaps the most welcome news from Moorpark is the fact that this ethic is still

thriving at Bend-Pak.

INTERVIEW

At Bend-Pak's office, our skull session included President Don Henthorn, General Manager Jay Molder, National Sales Manager Jeff Kritzer and Salesman Robert De Pue. The discussion generated two major themes: Intangible elements of Bend-Pak's success and the company's plans for diversification.

NECESSITY SPURS FLEXIBLE STYLE

During our conversation, Molder teed off on a topic close to the heart of every manager — management styles. If Bend-Pak is harboring a secret weapon, you can bet it's their fluid, flexible management style.

Did a mega-buck consultant steer them to this style? Did they learn it at some high-brow management seminar? Neither one! Henthorn and his lieutenants admit that mere necessity fueled the evolution of their style. And they agreed that this style:

- Combats employee boredom and fatigue;
- Makes employees feel more important;
- Gives employees more chances for advancement and growth;
- Attracts and holds a more desirable breed of worker;
- Gives the company more overall flexibility.

The four tenets of the Bend-Pak philosophy are:

1. Lead by example;
2. Challenge people constantly;
3. Draw from available talent FIRST, and;
4. Run lean.

Molder elaborated on how responsibility and opportunity go hand-in-hand. "When we challenge people by giving them responsibility," he said, "we also present new opportunities to them. If you have a man running a machine who wants to be a purchasing agent, try to accommodate him. Try to give him the opportunity to excel in a new area. There's limitless potential with this type of system."

Sometimes, Molder said, managers notice particular talents in certain



Henthorn: "My work has always been a very big part of my life. That's the way I'd like the workers to feel, too — that work is important and that everyone can move up the ladder of success. We see a lot of them doing that."

workers. But just as often, he said, it's the talented employee who asks a manager for a new challenge and more responsibility.

"We don't hold talent back," said Henthorn. "If somebody here has a talent, we want every bit of benefit from it. Naturally, we're going to pay him for it, but we also benefit ourselves by using that talent. In this system," he added, "the workers are able to learn more and progress more with their own lives."

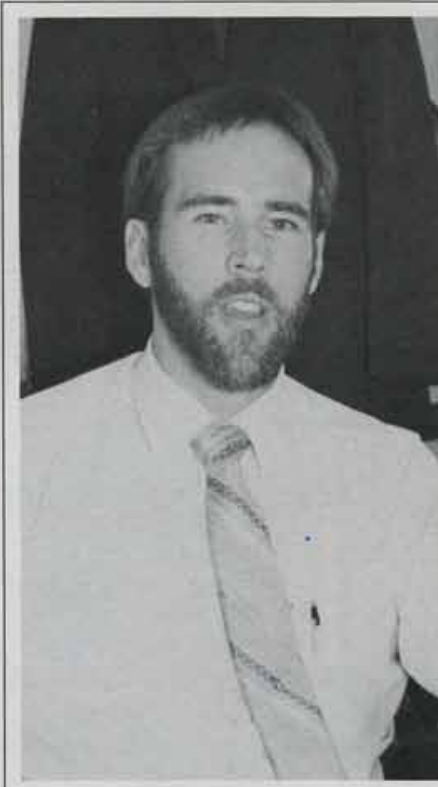
Two of the people interviewed in that office are living examples of the system's viability. Kritzer, an ex-mechanic, entered Bend-Pak via the shipping department. From shipping, he worked his way up to the purchasing department. Then, he tackled sales. Finally, he became national sales manager.

De Pue was a machine operator. Then someone tapped him for specialty work in research and development. Then Kritzer encouraged him to try selling. Now he's in sales and says he enjoys it.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

According to Molder, "The crew that we have right now is very dedicated and works very hard. Although we demand it, I think our employees also demand it of themselves.

"We have very, very motivated people here," he continued, "and they give more than 100 percent all the time. Our standard work week here is in excess of 50 hours. But people here learn to do more than one task and they like doing more than



Molder: "We run things lean here. We don't carry any dead wood. We don't have any nine-to-five people because we don't have a structure here that allows that."

one thing. They like having responsibility. Because everyone here wears more than one hat, everyone has a tremendous amount of responsibility — from the president to the guys running the machines."

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Henthorn and his team insist that successful managers must lead by example. "In other companies," Kritzer said, "you have managers that go into the plant and say, 'Hey, buddy, you're working Saturday,' while the managers go skiing or golf-



Kritzer: "The workers want our respect and we want their respect. We work just as hard as they do."

ing. The workers here know that we'll be in here with them Saturdays getting dirty right alongside them. And Don (Henthorn) can go out there and say, 'Something's wrong here.' But he'll put his work clothes on and show the man how to do it better."

"There's no one on my management team that's afraid to roll up his sleeves and work shoulder-to-shoulder with the guys," Henthorn commented.

MARKET RESPONSIVENESS

Bend-Pak management emphasized that being sensitive to customer needs pays big dividends. Customer input, they said, has helped shape their daily operations as well as their long range plans.

"Everybody in this company," Molder told us, "is available to our customers at virtually any time. No one here is above talking to customers. Whether it's a trouble call or not, we try to be attentive."

For example, Bend-Pak goes to market via sales reps and equipment distributors. As the company saw

continues next page

distribution changing, it changed too in order to accommodate its customers. "There used to be a lot more stocking warehouses and distributors than there are now," said Kritzer.

More and more, he explained, dollars and convenience dictate direct shipment of products to the end user instead of the distributor or warehouse. While the distributor may be the one that sold the piece of equipment, it often is Bend-Pak that has it delivered. "Although dis-

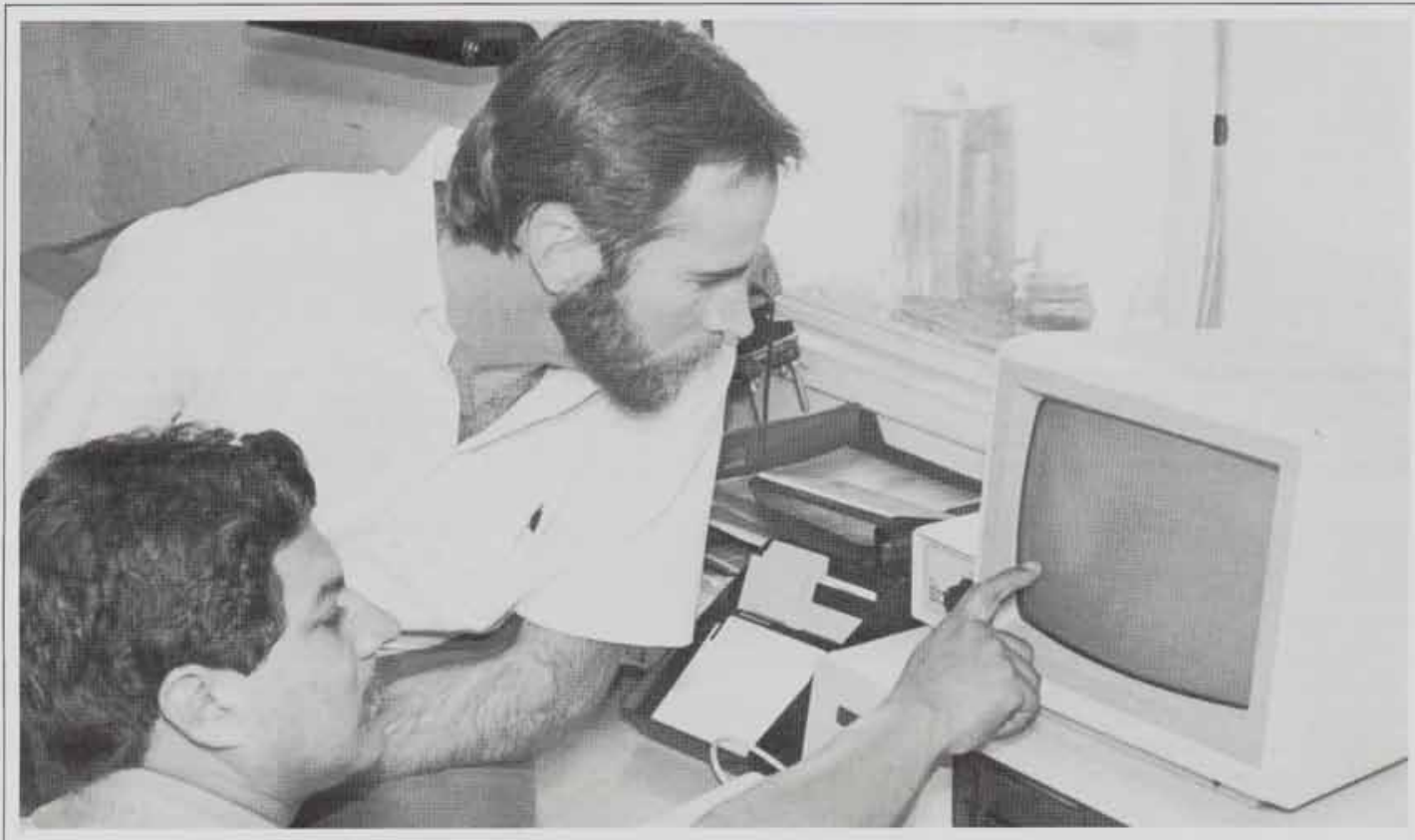
is super-quick manufacturing response time. And what's the key to rapid response time? You guessed it — flexible management and a dedicated crew!!

"Really," Henthorn admitted, "response time has always been critical to us. It has definitely made many key sales for us!"

"By being able to ship instantly from here, we've been able to make a lot of sales that our competitors have missed," Molder said. Occasion-

tronic alignment system that it will unveil this year. And the company is evaluating other products that would complement its existing equipment line.

"Due to the new unibody cars and the strut service out there, most shops are going to have to have some kind of alignment," Kritzer said. "With many strut changes," he noted, "you have to do an alignment to complete the job." Kritzer indicated that many of his bender customers are consider-



Molder noted that CAD/CAM has been a big asset to Bend-Pak. Here, he discusses design parameters with Production Manager Fernando Gomez (left).

tributors account for about 80 percent of our sales," Kritzer said, "almost 80 percent of our sales are drop-shipped to the end user now (bypassing an additional stop)."

"Things are going more and more in that drop-ship direction," Henthorn predicted, "because everyone involved has less dollars tied up in the transaction. Distributors don't want lifts sitting around. Everyone wants to keep warehousing to a minimum."

The key to survival and success in this new situation, the team agreed,

ally, he said, Bend-Pak relies on an eastern warehouse and a midwestern warehouse to satisfy some emergency orders.

EXPLORING NEW MARKETS

Substantial customer input has convinced Bend-Pak's leadership that, among other things, end users want new sources for alignment equipment as well as a one-stop supplier that can answer all their needs. Consequently, Bend-Pak has developed a multi-service four-wheel alignment rack in addition to an elec-

ing adding new undercar services such as alignment.

"Alignment falls right into our manufacturing capabilities here," Henthorn added. "It's a natural extension for us because it's a logical extension of what we're doing now."

POTENTIAL NEW PRODUCTS

Besides alignment, Bend-Pak's managers are considering filling out their product line with items such as:

- Several models of engine analyzers;
- Emissions analyzers;
- Hand-held diagnostic equipment;

■ Air conditioning charging stations.

According to Kritzer, the company has gradually expanded its distribution from exclusively muffler warehouses to non-exhaust types of distributors. He said they have to broaden their product line's appeal to these primarily non-exhaust prospects. Therefore, they'll need a variety of products to help them get a foot in the WD's or distributor's door.

"The bender opened certain doors for us," commented Henthorn. "Now

we have the lift line, and that's opening certain other doors for us. We're looking to see what new doors other equipment might open for us," he said.

"Alignment is our first big push," Henthorn said, "but we're going to move one step at a time. After each new line has proven successful, we'll move on to the next one," he said. "These new items would help Bend-Pak do better with its home-manufactured products."

EPILOGUE

Everyone's saying that the tube bender market has plateaued. If that's true, there appears to be a bright "after-bender" life for Bend-Pak. Although the company is eager to get those replacement bender sales, it hasn't placed all its eggs in one basket.

Apparently, these folks have the manpower, the attitude and the ability to adapt to a changing market. And adapting they are!■

Bend-Pak Inc. 646 Flinn Avenue, Moorpark, CA 93021 (805) 529-3675

President: Don Henthorn
General Manager: Jay Molder
Sales Manager: Jeff Kritzer

Marketing Method: Sales reps, equipment distributors.

Products: Tube benders, two-post and four-post surface-mount lifts, MIG welder, strut spring compressors, hand expanders, electronic wheel alignment.

BEND-PAK PRODUCT SAMPLER

Product: BA-Digital Tube Bender

Features: Programmable memory capability, electronic foot control, clampless swager, three-inch bending capacity, 180-degree bending capacity.

Product: Align Mast'r Multi-Purpose Lift

Features: Hydraulic scissors assembly, leveling legs, three turntable positions to accommodate different wheel-bases, extended rear slip plates, 12,000-pound capacity (7,000-pound scissors capacity), optional roller jacking beam.



Multiple. Choice.



Take your pick. Over 50 quality products in all. All from the nation's premier manufacturer of automotive service equipment. 4-Post and 2-Post Above-Ground Lifts, Alignment Equipment, and Benders designed for today's most discriminating auto mechanics and exhaust specialists.

Make the right choice. CALL OR WRITE BEND-PAK, INC., 646 Flinn Avenue, Moorpark, CA 93021.
(800) 253-2363 - (805) 529-3675 - FAX (805) 529-2909.

PRO LIFT pro lift
ABOVE-GROUND LIFTS™

Circle No. 9

Bend-Pak
INCORPORATED