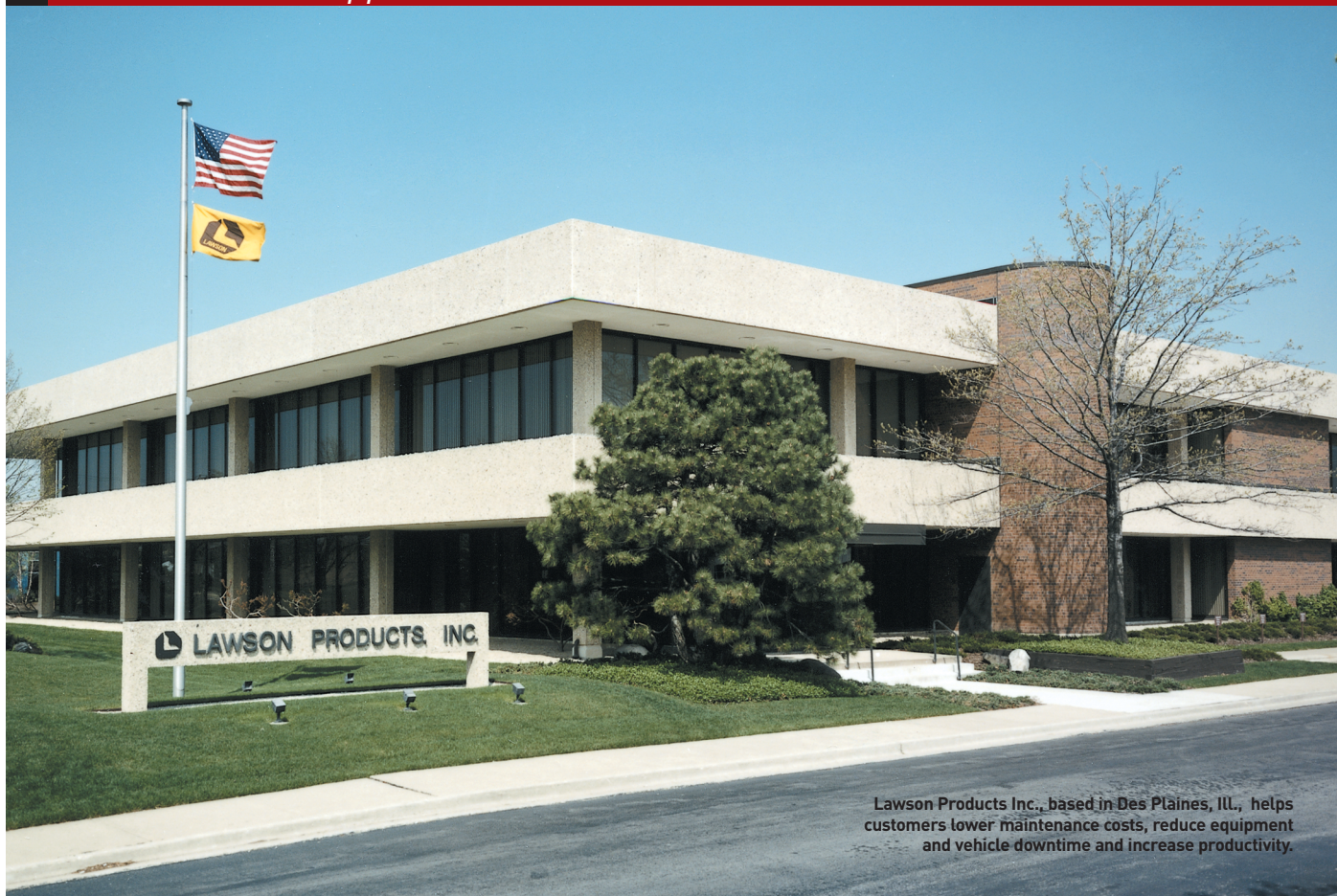


LAWSON INC. *supplies*

Lawson Products Inc., based in Des Plaines, Ill., helps customers lower maintenance costs, reduce equipment and vehicle downtime and increase productivity.

MAKING A CONNECTION

Des Plaines, Ill.-based Lawson Products sets itself apart through its sales force's face-to-face connection with customers, explains CEO Robert Washlow. —ERICA GALLAGHER

SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS “THE CITY OF Destiny,” Des Plaines, Ill., is home to Lawson Products Inc., a major maintenance and production products inventory control solutions company. From Des Plaines, the company has become an international operation that helps industrial, commercial equipment and transportation customers lower maintenance costs, reduce equipment and vehicle downtime and increase customers' productivity.

Sidney L. Port founded Lawson in 1952. According to CEO Robert J. Washlow, the company owes its success to distributing a broad range of products and services to more than 225,000 customers including expendable maintenance, repair, and replacement fasteners, chemical specialties, welding rods, shop supplies, hydraulic and flexible hoses, fittings, electrical supplies and production components.

These products are used for the repair and maintenance of capital equipment of all types in the industrial, heavy-duty

equipment, in-plant, buildings, and grounds maintenance and transportation fields.

The company operates 14 distribution centers across the United States, Canada, Mexico and the United Kingdom, and maintains an inventory of more than 135,000 individual SKUs. An additional 800,000 SKUs are readily available.

It maintains a record of more than 99 percent of all lines shipped complete within 24 hours of receipt, and most within the same day.

“Our competitors will handle some of the same types of items we do, but as far as we know, we are the one that handles the most of each – it's truly a one-stop shop for specialty chemicals, welding supplies and automotive body repair components,” Washlow says. “We're the only one that covers the spectrum with this

PROFILE

Lawson Products Inc.
www.lawsonproducts.com
Headquarters: Des Plaines, Ill.
Employees: 1,300
Products: Maintenance and production parts
Robert J. Washlow, CEO:
 “Every product we inventory is tested and approved by our own engineering department.”

LAWSON INC. *supplies*

▷level of depth. Another difference is that we're organized into specialized companies that have testing labs at each business. We're also the only one we know of that has the specialized product lines handled by specialized sales and engineering staffs that ensure quality and product needs are met within each niche."

Quality Focus

QUALITY IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT INITIATIVE AT LAWSON THAT Washlow says no other company in the industry that he knows of "backs every product to the hilt. The smallest little screw to a half-ton sheet of wear plate to a 240-gallon chemical container is backed with a \$100 million insurance policy."

Before any product is ready for distribution, it must exceed the rigors of Lawson's engineering departments. "Every product we inventory is tested and approved by our own engineering department – we take quality and safety very seriously," Washlow says. "Our customers are people who require the highest quality and service, and that is what we provide."

Likewise, the company's R&D departments evaluate the quality and practicality of all its products in addition to innovating new products.

Washlow explains that because Lawson helps customers keep their machinery running without having to stock thousands of inventoried parts, it must make sure it has what customers might need at any time.

"We are the inventory supplier of parts that customers need to keep their machines running. We must keep parts on hand,"

he says. "It's our promise to have no more than necessary levels of stock in our customers' facilities. Before they run out, we're there. As their stock is depleted, we'll restock items to maintain proper levels."

And to help keep customers' machines running, Lawson must not only have all of the latest parts, but stock parts that have been in use for many years. "Our engineers have to stay current, but they must also understand older equipment as well," Washlow says. "Our engineers and product development people are very important and work hand-in-hand to make sure we have what customers need."

Setting Itself Apart

LAWSON'S MORE THAN 1,800 INDEPENDENT SALES AGENTS AND inside sales representatives are spread across the United States and Canada, representing Lawson and its subsidiaries.

Washlow says Lawson will continue to follow its current customers into other areas.

"Our primary interest is learning to serve current markets better than we now do," he says. "Our history has been to operate with a face-to-face salesforce, which has proven to be a superior method."

The company plans to continue strengthening and developing its face-to-face salesforce.

"Face-to-face sales will remain the mainstay of our business because it's the best way to provide service," Washlow says. "We want to continue to improve our capabilities of serving the customer in whichever way best services his or her needs." ■

Service and Integrity in Everything We Do

- 1,800 independent sales agents
- \$100 million product liability policy
- 225,000+ customers
- 99% of lines shipped in 24 hours
- 135,000+ sku's
- 14 modern distribution centers



Lawson Products, MRO

Cronatron Welding

Drummond American

Kent Automotive



Lawson Products, Inc.
Corporate Headquarters: Des Plaines, IL

Addison, IL • Vernon Hills, IL • Dallas, TX • Fairfield, NJ • Suwanee, GA
Reno, NV • Charlotte, NC • Mississauga, Ont. • Bristol, UK • Guadalajara, Jalisco, MEX

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