

Performance Composites: Growth Through Quality and Service



By Jennifer Sikorski,
CF Assistant Editor

CF: How many employees do you have?

FH: Forty-five.

CF: What is the nature of your company?

FH: We're basically a fiberglass job shop. We make fiberglass products per our customers' requirements and specifications.

CF: What is your company's background?

FH: The company was founded back in 1972, and it's always been a job shop doing custom fiberglass fabrication work. I bought the business in 1994, so I've had it for nine years. The original owner retired and I took over the business. We've been growing steadily since I took over.

CF: How has your company evolved from its beginnings?

FH: We've changed the focus of trying to do everything. Since fiberglass is such a broad type of an application, we focus more on certain types of customers, if you will. We're more quality oriented and service oriented. We look for customers who fit that kind of requirement.

CF: How did you get started in the business?

FH: I came out of aerospace. I was a mechanical engineer working at Hughes Aircraft at the time, and I worked a lot with composites material for the aerospace advanced composites. I was in the industry for about eight or nine years, and I always wanted to have my own company. So I left aerospace and bought

this business. It took me about a year and a half of searching in various businesses before I found this one. I went through all the transactions and was able to buy it.

CF: Do you face any obstacles in the regulatory arena?

FH: Yes. Our biggest problem currently is trying to move—we've outgrown our current facility—and it's just about impossible to do that. We're in the Los Angeles area, so we're regulated by the South Coast Air Quality Management District. And since the company has been here for 30 years, we have five spray booths that are grandfathered into the current

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location. We have a lot of VOC allotment. For us to move, we'd lose all that. Either we have to find a facility that happens to have all we need, which is almost impossible to find, or we have to go to VACT, which is something we can't afford to do at our current stage. We're between a rock and a hard place. There are some other alternatives we're looking at, but right now that's our challenge. How do we relocate and continue to grow? The regulatory environment is making it very difficult, even impossible, to do that.


CF: What developments or research would you like to see happen to improve the industry?

FH: I think a lot of the current research is in the right direction with some of the closed molding technologies. We're getting into resin infusion. We have one product line currently that is using that technology. But unfortunately, the nature of the technology and the cost structure is such that we can't use it for a majority of our products. Low VOC resins and equipment, anything along those lines, help us tremendously because they give us more flexibility with the regulatory agencies.

CF: Can you describe your marketing efforts?

FH: We use a manufacturers' rep company, and we also have one inside sales person. Basically, we know who are customers are and who can use our services and products, and we target them directly. We find who our customers are and knock on their doors. It's worked well for us. We're very focused on reaching them. Rather than trying to do all things for all people, we know what we're good at, and we chase the customers who require our services.

CF: Where do you see your company in five years?

FH: Hopefully, we'll continue our growth and continue to bring in new technologies and processes. Basically, more of the same, and keep refining it. 

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