

Resin Price Increases Threat to Sawyer Family Business



RF: What is the nature of your business?

BS: We produce very large hand lay-ups that can be as large as 4in.x 20in.x 34ft. By the way, this works out to be about 135 gallons of resin in one shot. As you can imagine, this is a great way to motivate the crew when you pour the catalyst to that much resin. We have heard rumors that this is not very wise, but sometimes it pays to do things your own way. The benefit is that we do not need heaters in the shop during the afternoon when it's winter. This lay-up is then cut into strips that are in turn machined into wear strips for the paper industry. Our record run is 877 days at 4000 fpm. This is way too good. We are thinking about looking for ways to reduce our quality. Just kidding, of course!

RF: How many employees do you have?

BS: We currently have 9 employees and are expecting to add 2 as soon as we can find the people that have the right fit. I consider my most important job to be finding and keeping productive employees.

RF: What is your company's background and how has it evolved from its beginnings?

BS: My father William D. Sawyer, Sr. graduated from what was then West Coast University plastics school in Los

Angeles right after WWII. In 1977, my parents and Mr. Ed Nolen founded our company on the grand sum of \$30,000. Initially we started out machining polyethylene for the paper industry. However, in 1980 we jumped at the chance to produce an asbestos replacement material. We came up with a thermoset material consisting of vinyl ester resin and aramid fibre.

Bill Sawyer
President
Sawyer Industrial
Plastics, Inc.
West Monroe, LA



RF: How did you get started in the industry?

BS: I graduated from Southern College of Technology in Marietta, GA in 1975. After finishing college in mechanical engineering, I worked as a project engineer and then as a sales rep for a few years. When I got the chance to join my father, I made the move to my present company.

RF: What obstacles does your company face today in the regulatory or technical arenas?

BS: The major obstacles we face are the same as every one else. Our resin costs have increased by 29 percent since the middle of last year and we understand that there may be even more increases in the near future. After looking at the

income statement, I would classify as not an obstacle, but a direct threat to our future.

RF: What are your marketing efforts?

BS: Our marketing efforts consist of the usual, and the innovative. Our current market (the paper industry) is shrinking here in the United States; however, we are making good progress in China. Yes, we actually export to China. One advantage is that the boats are not exactly full going in that direction. This can't last for long, so we are developing the means to start production over there.

RF: What development or research would you like to see happen to improve the industry?

BS: I would like to see research or development that would allow us to reduce our waste factor. We put way too much money in the trash.

RF: Where do you see your business in five years?

BS: The only people that think a five-year projection is worth anything are bankers. In one year, we will have strengthened our capital reserves. In two years we will have two of our development products on line. In three years, who knows? Being in business would be nice.

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