

PIPELINERS

HALL of FAME NEWS



A Vision for Success



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Darby Equipment Company sets its sights on the continued growth of its people, partnerships, processes and facilities

Over the last decade Darby Equipment has implemented a comprehensive, strategic plan focusing on its people, partnerships, processes and facilities. The management team at Darby recognized the tremendous opportunity in the pipeline industry and knew they needed to formulate a plan to succeed in a growing industry while maintaining the high quality standards and responsive, personal service of the smaller company they once were.

Darby Equipment President Bob Darby notes “Just because we’ve grown doesn’t mean our customers change their expectations regarding our services and products.” According to CEO, Ed Darby, “From the start it was instilled in everyone at Darby that regardless of the business cycles inherent in this industry, quality would always be essential. That has been the foundation on which the company was built.” To this he adds, “In this industry if you claim you are going to provide quality products and service and don’t, you will be found out pretty quickly. You better walk the walk.”

Darby has always been committed to providing domestic pipeline contractors with the highest quality equipment, service and around the clock support. Growth in the past five years both in the U.S. market and a sharp increase in global demand has made the investment in people, facilities, processes and partnerships imperative to meeting those demands.

People

Darby continues to add personnel across the board including engineering, fabrication, machinists, inside sales and administrative personnel while making significant additions to sales representation across the country. In the Northeast, Darby has added Ray Keller as a consultant. Ray, a former CRC Evans employee of 45 years says the decision to work with Darby was an easy one. “I am tremendously impressed with the respect they have for their employees which transfers directly to the respect they show their cus-

tomers”, states Keller. Sales representative Cathy Watson, also formerly with CRC Evans, added “Darby provides its customers with an unmatched level of customer service and accomplishes it with a personal touch.” Another remarkable addition to the sales team was former owner of C&L Pipeline Equipment, Ferrell Lake heading up the company’s southern region. “We are very fortunate to have Ray and Ferrell on board. Combined, their experience and expertise is unmatched in the industry. They are both well respected and bring a wealth of knowledge to our team,” says Bobby Darby, Vice President of Sales & Marketing.



From left is Darby’s management team: Ed Darby, Bob Darby, Bobby Darby, Ryan Darby and Nick Minden



Since 2009 Darby has added new office space, a machine shop and storage to bring the facilities complex to over 60,000 square feet.

Facilities

In 2009, the company recognized the need for a bigger facility and purchased a 40,000 square foot manufacturing facility on a 32-acre tract of industrial park land in Tulsa, Okla. Since the purchase, the

company has added new office space, a machine shop and storage to bring the current square footage to over 60,000 square feet. The added storage has allowed Darby to continue its practice of storing all clamps and mandrels inside, extending the life and reliability of this equipment. The latest addition, a fully equipped CNC machine shop, will provide quick turnaround of the quality machine parts necessary for Darby's product lines. According to Ryan Darby, Vice-President of Operations, "Our investment in the machine shop resulted from our assessment that our machined parts have become the pacesetter for production output and we had to address that to keep up with demand and maintain quality. An on-site, state-of-the-art machine shop coupled with our great engineering staff was the obvious answer. Now we have more scheduling flexibility to prioritize and respond much quicker to customer needs."

Processes

Darby's focus on processes are intended to improve efficiency and quality. One task that has always been a part of Darby's shipping procedure is testing every piece of equipment by a service technician and his supervisor before shipping it out to the field, meaning at least two sets of eyes examine each piece of equipment before it leaves the facility. "We wouldn't think of shipping a product that we weren't absolutely sure would arrive on site ready to run. Nothing is more frustrating to a contractor than getting equipment that doesn't perform properly. That's why we do it. It may not seem like a major step, but quality customer service is doing the little things that really matter to the customer," says Ryan Darby.



Every piece of Darby equipment is thoroughly checked before shipping by multiple personnel.



In-house machining to exacting standards.

Always in search of a better way to do things, Darby joined a group of regional businesses called the Lean Forum and then was honored to be invited to participate in the Lean Champions group. Both groups are a collection of successful companies committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of their businesses. It is just one more way for the company to stay focused on continuous improvement. This has resulted in the machine shop addition as well as increased flow of parts and products through the manufacturing facility.

This improvement was necessary for the company to reach its highest level of production in the company's history in 2011. There are no plans to slow down production in the near future, either. Says Ed Darby, "We are committed to building whatever equipment is necessary to meet the needs of our current and future customers and are excited that our improvements and investments are allowing us to meet those needs".

Partnerships

The company also believes partnering with key companies and supporting trade groups is important to the success of Darby Equipment and the industry. Darby continues to be a member and strong supporter of many industry organizations, such as the Pipe Line Contractors Association, the Distribution Contractors Association, the American Pipeline Contractors Association and the International Pipe Line & Offshore Contractors Association. Darby's long-time commitment to these organizations has been integral to the development of strong relationships with customers and other fellow vendors. These relationships have resulted in leadership roles for Darby in these organizations including Bob Darby currently serving on the DCA Board of Directors and Bobby Darby recently being elected to become the upcoming Associate Member Representative for the PLCA. In addition to the Lean Champion companies, Darby also collaborates with other prominent Tulsa manufacturers and is a leading member of the Oklahoma Business Ethics Consortium. Bobby Darby, discussing the importance of relationships in the industry notes, "All of the improvements that we have made would not even be possible without the pipeline contractors who have been key partners and loyal customers. We will never lose sight of that fact."

Core Values

Bob Darby, reflecting on the growth of Darby, "Of course we love the growth we've experienced and we've always welcomed the challenge of maintaining consistent quality in everything we do. It's the only way we know and we will not change our core values. They're what got us here and they'll take us forward. We're committed to quality. It's just that simple." The company's persistent focus on its core values has been rewarded with a growth rate of nearly 25 percent annually over the last ten years.



A Darby bending machine being prepared for the next job.

Nick Minden, Chief Financial Officer, noted "Pride is infused in this company's culture. It is embraced by each and every employee. That pride and our outstanding employees are what produce consistent quality and ensure a strong commitment to our customers."

It also helps the 30 year old company live out its vision statement, which it hopes will take the company to new heights in its next 30 years: **"Developing People, Building Partnerships, Ensuring Quality, Continuously Improving."**