

LEGACY SPOTLIGHT

Thiele Technologies: An American Manufacturing Success Story

Continuous technological innovation and a commitment to customer-centric service, complemented in recent years by a number of strategic acquisitions, have allowed Thiele Technologies to emerge as one of the largest and most well-balanced manufacturers of high-speed integrated packaging machinery solutions in the global marketplace. Through the combined strength of its diverse legacy brands, Thiele continues to enhance its position as a leading provider of comprehensive end-of-line packaging equipment solutions for a broad range of domestic and international markets.

With a history spanning nearly 100 years, Thiele leads the industry in the design, manufacture and integration of placing, feeding, bagging, cartoning, case packing and palletizing systems for a variety of industries, including petrochemicals, fresh and frozen food, pet food, beverage, dairy, bakery, pharmaceutical, medical devices, cosmetics, horticulture, paper goods, and consumer mailing and collating. The company employs more than 600 team members across eight operations in the U.S. and Europe, and supports an installed base worldwide.

Thiele Technologies became an operating division of Barry-Wehmler in 1998 through the acquisition of Bemis Packaging Machinery Company in Minneapolis, Minn., and its subsequent integration with Thiele Engineering Company, Master Palletizer and Frontier Equipment. Larry Smith, who had joined Bemis Packaging Machinery Company in 1977 and served as president since 1990, was appointed president of the newly formed Thiele Technologies. The integration of complementary companies to create a stronger overall organization became a cornerstone of the Thiele growth model.

“Our vision for Thiele was to evolve an integrated systems supplier of end-of-line packaging with a common technology platform that would surpass the capabilities of ordinary individual component integrators,” Larry explained. “We knew that we had to take more of a ‘full system’ approach. We needed to move from simply supplying components to providing complete system solutions. One of the key elements of our strategy was acquiring companies that not only enhanced our current product offerings, but also helped us expand into new markets.”

From 2005 to 2008, Thiele completed a series of five strategic acquisitions that dramatically diversified its profile: *Edmeyer*, which provided a completely new revenue stream in the form of dairy equipment; *Slidell*, which complemented Thiele’s historic bagging product line; *Streamfeeder*, which allowed Thiele to expand into feeder equipment for the mailing and graphics industries; *Nigrelli Systems*, whose high-speed beverage packaging equipment significantly enhanced and expanded Thiele’s own beverage line; and *SWF Companies*, which added tray and bliss forming,



vertical cartoning, and case packing technologies along with such well-known packaging machinery names as Salwasser, Padlocker, Tisma, Dyna-Pak, McDowell International, Tri-Sterling, and GSMA Systems.

An important aspect of Thiele’s ability to effectively integrate new companies into its business model while providing a seamless transition for its growing customer base, has been its continuing dedication to Lean principles and practices. More than three decades of Lean experience has allowed Thiele to realize benefits that extend well beyond cost savings and a safer work environment.

“Everyone feels they have a personal stake in making the company successful, keeping our practices Lean and meeting our customers’ needs,” Larry explained. “That sense of ownership helps us retain quality associates, and our long-term associates continue to contribute to the ‘tribal knowledge’ that helps drive our success in specialized markets.”

In August 2009, Thiele announced the acquisition of Hudson-Sharp Machine Company, a world leader in the design and manufacture of plastic bag machinery, pouch making equipment and reclosable packaging solutions, with primary operations in Green Bay, Wis., and Brussels, Belgium. The acquisition leveraged Thiele’s history in bag weighing, bag filling and bag palletizing systems with Hudson-Sharp’s market-leading bag converting technology to create a single competitive source of complete bagging solutions.

“Every machine or system we produce does something that directly impacts real human beings,” Larry said. “Whether it’s the way pet food is bagged or milk cartons are filled or soft drinks are packaged for transportation and storage, our processes and solutions all have real-world application. It’s important to us that we deliver a great solution, provide true value to our customers, and offer rewarding and fulfilling work to our team members all at the same time. These are the values that have made Thiele an American manufacturing success story, and they’re integral threads that connect us to the companies we’ve acquired or partnered with throughout our history.” ■