

Rival material handlers' deal has combined firm in demand

Merger offers manufacturing customers a 'one-stop shop' for their needs

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Hashing out an amicable merger between rival firms over dinner may seem like TV fare. However, that's the script Rick Andrews and the brother team of Jeff and Trevor Stohr followed when they brought together their two Cleveland companies that distribute material-handling equipment.

Jeff Stohr, president of the newly combined Conveyer & Caster-Equipment for Industry Corp., said the Sept. 1 merger that was settled upon at The Harp, an Irish pub on the near West Side, is receiving high marks from many customers and already is generating more sales.

The Stohr brothers ran Conveyer & Caster Corp. and Mr. Andrews was owner of Equipment for Industry Inc. Their merger has integrated the smaller, six-person Equipment for Industry into Conveyer & Caster's operation at 3501 Detroit Ave.

The new company, which employs 30, recently renovated the 20,000-square-foot space on Detroit. However, Mr. Stohr said the business soon will need another 10,000 square feet to accommodate the 15% spike in sales that Conveyer & Caster is forecasting for 2007. The private company doesn't disclose sales figures.

Mr. Stohr said because original equipment manufacturers increasingly are incorporating mechanized means to move materials in their plants and warehouses, the ability to offer customers "a one-stop shop" should push demand for both conveyor and caster products as well as the storage rack and shelving product lines sold under Equipment for Industry.

"We knew the economy wasn't going to bring (growth)," Jeff Stohr said. "We had to make it happen ourselves."

Distribution areas for both companies include northern Ohio as well as parts of New York and Pennsylvania. The merged company has sales offices in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Syracuse and Toledo and is looking at Columbus for geographic expansion because that city boasts a growing list of distributors and warehouse operations.

Conveyer & Caster was established in 1961 in Ohio City by the Stohr brothers' grandfather, Albert Stohr.

Mr. Andrews, former president of the 51-year-old Equipment for Industry and now vice president of sales for Conveyer & Caster, said while the companies shared many of the same clients, each enjoyed healthy name recognition among several large manufacturers. Current customers of the merged company include General Motors Corp., Nestle USA and Whirlpool Corp.

Mr. Andrews said the company is expanding its sales force to circulate the new name to less-familiar markets, including health care and consumer goods.

"We're going to see dynamic growth from existing customers as well as new customers," Mr. Andrews said.

Trevor Stohr, vice president of operations, said because both businesses were similar in scope, the learning curve for the employees and sales staff hasn't been difficult.

"We have tried to make the transition as smooth as possible for the employees," he said.

Another family business in Cleveland, Pucel Enterprises Inc., which produces supply carts, work benches and storage cabinets, looks at the merger between the two distributors as a boon for its business.

Pucel vice president Robert Mlakar said the manufacturer used both companies to distribute its product lines. However, he said the

merger "generates greater market opportunities" to push Pucel's material handling products.

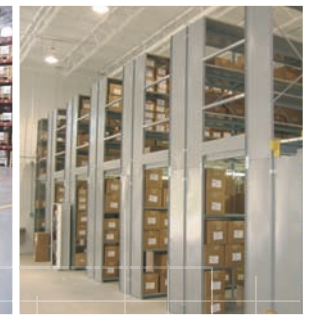
At the time of the merger, Conveyer & Caster was looking at buildings in Avon to accommodate the larger company, but opted to remain close to its Cleveland roots, Jeff Stohr said.

The city of Cleveland this summer approved a \$10,000 loan for five years as well as a \$5,000 storefront renovation grant for the \$150,000 renovation.



Rick Andrews (left), vice president of sales, Trevor Stohr (center), vice president of operations and Jeff Stohr, president, of Conveyer & Caster-Equipment for Industry Corp. of Cleveland, found common ground with the merger of their two rival material handling firms.

MARC GOLUB



The merger of Conveyer & Caster + Equipment for Industry... Together, we keep your business rolling.

Two Cleveland companies with a long and successful heritage in the material handling distribution business have joined forces and are maintaining their headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio.

Conveyer & Caster Corporation and **Equipment for Industry** recently merged and have combined their staff and operations into a newly renovated building in Cleveland and have adopted the name **Conveyer & Caster - Equipment for Industry**.

With a new logo and the new theme "**We Keep Your Business Rolling**," the company is ready to move forward with a larger sales force, enhanced customer service support and more technical expertise available to all customers.

Expanded Capabilities

Our merger, one of the first of its kind in the industry, creates a distributor that has the capability to offer a full-line of material handling products for manufacturing, warehousing and distribution companies. We service many industries including: automotive, health care, food service, manufacturing and warehousing.

Now when you are searching for a complete material handling solution for your operation, you can find it all under one roof. The merger has expanded our product line and makes it easier for "**one stop shopping**" with a sales representative who is dedicated to providing you with the ideal solutions for all of your requirements.

Our sales force has grown with more industry-specific expertise and a larger customer service department. We also provide you with technical expertise about all product lines from professionals with decades of experience in our industry.

"Over the last three years, we decided that we wanted to create a single source for material handling solutions for our customers," said Jeff Stohr, president of the newly merged Conveyer & Caster-Equipment for Industry. "We believe in our mission to keep your business rolling," said Stohr.



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