

Thurston Manufacturing Is Geared Up for Growth



Layton Jensen credits high-quality welds and workmanship to minimizing warranty claims for Blu-Jet agricultural products and Circle R Side Dump semi-trailers.

Marked by a major acquisition, plant expansion, and accelerated domestic and overseas business activity in eastern Europe, Africa and China, 2013 has been a busy year for the manufacturer of Blu-Jet® agricultural tillage and fertilizer injectors and Circle R Side Dump semi-trailers.

"It's like spinning plates on The Ed Sullivan Show—you have to keep them going," explained Thurston Manufacturing CEO Layton Jensen. "We have a lot of plates spinning right now."

Multitasking isn't new for the family-owned business, which was incorporated in 1971 by Jensen's father, Wayne, a farmer and entrepreneur who saw the potential for a self-coupling wagon hitch that later became the first product in the Blu-Jet line. Today, the

company is co-owned by Layton and his sons, Ryan, Chief Operating Officer, and Nick, Chief Marketing Officer.

Thurston Manufacturing made news in May when it announced its acquisition of the assets of Simonsen Iron Works and began operations in its Spencer, Iowa, facility. According to Nick Jensen, "This modern 130,000 square-foot facility allows us to strengthen the business through market diversification by adding a contract manufacturing division. It also provides a relief valve to current production of Blu-Jet and Circle R Side Dump products, allowing us to accept orders we would otherwise be forced to turn away."

The acquisition came on the heels of a major expansion of the company's existing facility in Thurston, which

increased its square footage by 30 percent with the addition of a new paint line and equipment upgrades. The Thurston facility had been operating at maximum capacity for more than eight years, running three shifts, fifty hours per week.

The company's growth has been fueled by a steady stream of new products and existing product enhancements. "We have a full engineering staff that is continually updating current products, as well as introducing new products every year or two," according to Layton Jensen. "We offer a nice line of products" he added.

One innovative product is the sub-surface tiller, designed to fracture compaction in the soil. Introduced in 1977, the product gained popularity as conservation tillage was adopted as a sustainable farming practice. "We have also added new products to our fertilizer applicator line, diversifying into liquid and dry types of fertilizers," Layton Jensen shared.

Thurston has been developing its network of Blu-Jet dealers in Russia, Europe, Africa, Australia and China, where export sales have steadily increased. "Our goal is to expand in these export markets so, if there's a downturn in the U.S. agricultural economy, we can maintain

production levels," Layton Jensen noted.

Layton Jensen cited Thurston Manufacturing's relationship with First National Bank as contributing to the recent expansion of production capacity for the company's domestic and overseas markets. "We've been with First National Bank for more than three years and they've been great to work with," Layton Jensen acknowledged. "With the Simonsen acquisition, we were able to develop a plan that worked well for us, the bank and Simonsen, making it all come together."

As for the company's future growth, Layton Jensen sees continued strong demand for Blu-Jet tillage and fertilizer injectors. "As the world's population increases, it is important that agricultural productivity continues to improve on a per-acre basis," he added.



Scott Obermeyer prepares parts for priming and painting in the plant's new paint line.



Proudly Supporting
Local Businesses.

First National Bank
One with You.®

First National Bank is passionate about helping local businesses like Thurston Manufacturing, because when businesses thrive, so does our community.