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FLANDERS

Renewing Machines, Taking Care of People

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Management: Allen Patterson, CEO

By **Charlee Beasor**

It's hard to believe that FLANDERS was once a two-man motor repair shop in Evansville. Today, the company employs over 800 worldwide and owns nearly a million square feet of facility space, with regional service centers across four continents.

Frank Flanders founded the company in 1947 as Flanders Electric Motor Service. One of his employees was Roy Patterson, who purchased the company with a partner in 1962. Over five decades later, the Patterson family continues to own and operate the business, led today by third-generation CEO Allen Patterson.

Patterson explains the three main "arms" of the business: repair services, power systems and mechanical services.

"Our largest portion of the business is our repair services portion. That's electric motor repair and field service. We repair really any size motor from commercial, industrial to heavy industrial mining applications. We repair the largest motors that are out there, essentially. We've had 25,000-horsepower motors in our facility before," he outlines.

"We found being more of a one-stop shop allows our customers peace of mind with one form of accountability."

Inflection points

While Patterson has been at the company's helm for around nine months, he's been with FLANDERS for 21 years full time and, before that, working with his father and grandfather since he was young.

A new name in 2012 was one of the more recent pivotal moments.

"It changed from Flanders Electric to FLANDERS due to the way our business has changed. ... One of the big areas of growth is automation. We automate mining equipment and equipment for steel and aluminum mills. It's not necessarily electric," Patterson offers.

"We may automate something that's hydraulic, or it's a plant that's mainly mechanical in nature. Flanders Electric narrowed us and was narrowing when we were trying to broaden what we were providing our customers."

Another major turning point for the company was getting involved in the mining industry. Patterson's father, David, spearheaded an exchange program when he was CEO.

"It's really sort of a very mining-centric repair program that allows customers to experience very little downtime with electrical rotating equipment. We own spare motors for these machines, so a mine can utilize these spares in a cost-effective manner and experience no downtime," he adds.

“Innovation continues to be the sort of thing for the future of FLANDERS. Applying that same mindset in different areas is really the way we’re going to continue our advantage going forward, in my view.”

Patterson is encouraged by new technology, a positive U.S. economy, and growth opportunities here and around the world.

“Our vision is to bring life and renewal to all we serve around the world. Our business is bringing life to machines, life to automation – but also to be transparent and do good for the communities that we’re in. That’s something at the heart of a lot of FLANDERS employees,” he declares.

Customers are No. 1

Only about 350 of the company’s 800 employees are based in Evansville and having associates spread across the world can be challenging. But locating the company’s regional

service centers near customers is critical.

“We see that we’re able to serve a lot better the closer we are. (You get) better information and the better service ends up being when you’re there with them,” Patterson notes. “A lot of spreading out has been around the mining industry globally.”

Operations Support Manager Krissa Stevens oversees customer service, shipping, receiving, inventory, purchasing and the inside sales group at the Maryland Street location in Evansville, about five miles south of the corporate headquarters.

Stevens has been with the company almost 10 years and feels strongly that customers are receiving the highest quality service.

“(We) want to go in and help you figure out why you’re having issues with your motors or your drives. We want to create your solution, be your partner,” she emphasizes. “If there’s a failure in the middle of the night,

we want to be the place that you pick up and call. You are going to have quality behind that, service behind that and you are going to feel like our partner.”

She sees firsthand how customers respond.

“Having those customers continue to call and keep returning – there’s a reason they’re still calling, a reason they’re still returning,” Stevens asserts.

If there is a problem, company owners respond to issues and ensure customers understand they’re the highest priority.

“I have never seen the Patterson family shy away from having those types of conversations, ever. That says something about them too,” she expresses.

It’s no different with the FLANDERS employee base, Stevens offers. Despite its growth, the company maintains a close-knit feel.

“These people are my family. It is family here. You hear people say that, but this is real. It’s one of the advantages of being owned by the Patterson family,” she maintains. “When Allen (and others) walk around at a facility they don’t spend every day at and they know each employee by name, that says something about the people you are working for.”

Planning for CHANGE

Miguel Ortiz is a field engineer who has been with FLANDERS almost two years.

He says he truly anticipates the opportunities that await each day.

“I’m just glad I’m not waking up going, ‘I gotta go to work.’ Most times I get up looking forward to what I have to do that day and new experiences. With field engineering, I get calls for all kinds of new and different stuff. It goes with our values: Change is constant. We’re here for the people,” Ortiz contends.

Ortiz went through knee surgery last year and says the company did everything it could to help him cope.

“They take care of their own. ... I worked from home, I helped out on paperwork and they were able to work with me,” he says.

“The leadership here, I believe everybody’s got that attitude. ... The heart of FLANDERS is in the right place.”

The FLANDERS values spell an acronym: caring for people, humility, absolute integrity and trustworthiness, never giving up, growth and excellence.

The first letters together spell CHANGE.

“It’s a little ironic in that core values aren’t supposed to change, but what we thought is that we’re in an environment that’s constantly changing,” Patterson affirms. “Technology is changing. We have new competitors and a lot of business is full of change. Even in the midst of all this change and turmoil at times, these are things that are non-negotiable.”



Pivotal FLANDERS moments include a name change in 2012 and getting into a new industry by offering a mining equipment motor exchange program. Much of FLANDERS’ growth has been a result of following the mining industry around the world.

