



Anyone who has been to an outdoor, sports, recreation or entertainment venue has probably taken shelter under or encountered one of Anchor Industries' state-of-the-art products.

ANCHOR INDUSTRIES

Coverings Company Charts Lasting Course

Address: 7701 Highway 41 N, Evansville, IN 47725

Phone: (812) 867-2421

Website: www.anchorinc.com

Employees: 325 in Indiana and 35 in Miami, Florida

Resources: Dave Conner, chief operating officer and chief financial officer, and Christen Mogavero, vice president of sales

By Anthony Schoettle

Most wouldn't blame Anchor Industries for being a bit set in its ways. Founded in 1892, it has been a fixture in Evansville for nearly 133 years.

A firm that has enjoyed such longevity should probably stick with what got them here. But the company's captains would rather walk the plank than buy into that mentality.

Like an expedition ship on the high seas, Anchor Industries – maker of event, party and wedding tents; awnings and outdoor fabric shade solutions; fabric buildings and structures; safety pool covers; fire shelters; military products; and other custom fabric and frame products – is always looking to its next pivot and new horizon. It's an all-hands-on-deck mindset that keeps the company sailing forward.

"There's a strong culture of change at Anchor and not getting set in your ways," explains Dave Conner, the company's COO and CFO. "It's a bottom up (mentality), where everybody is making Anchor stronger and stronger."

Christen Mogavero, Anchor's vice president of sales, adds, "Change is really a part of what we're doing every single day. That approach gets us doing things the best way."

The pivoting philosophy has multiple benefits. First, Conner says, it empowers employees because they know their ideas are listened to and often acted on. "That's been a big drawing card for us in terms of not only attracting, but retaining talent," he shares. "We're not saying we won't consider new ideas just because we've done something a certain way for a long time."

According to Mogavero, it also mandates the company seeks "problem solvers" during employee recruitment. "We want people to constantly look for new and better ways of doing things."

She emphasizes little of this is done in a silo. "Everything hinges on collaboration. Working in teams of people is key, and our people must be willing to work not only with people in their own division but across departments. We see very few isolated solutions."

But the two Anchor executives admit change can at times be difficult. "It's critical that we do this in a respectful and humble way," Conner acknowledges.

Anchor has an acronym its employees live by, REACH, which stands for Respect, Engage, Achieve (through learning), Courage and Humility. "We're not merely changing for the sake of change, REACH helps us optimize and maximize everything we do," Mogavero emphasizes.

Standing tall

That mindset proved invaluable five years ago and enabled the company to stay strong during the pandemic despite the circumstances.

With weddings and other events canceled as well as recreation venues and sports complexes closed, much of Anchor's business was in peril. A bevy of Anchor's competitors – many in Asia and South America – dramatically slowed or halted production. But Anchor was determined to stay open and keep its 300-plus employees – the vast majority from the Evansville area – on the job.

In the spring of 2020, business slowed to a trickle. But by June, the phone began ringing again – and ringing and ringing. With many of its competitors docked and unable to get their production going again when demand rose unexpectedly, lots of tent-buying customers turned to Anchor. Those tents were needed in unforeseen places such as COVID testing sights and later vaccination clinics, temporary hospitals and outdoor dining venues, which were popping up everywhere. The company also made a big push into providing portable structures for disaster relief efforts.

"During COVID in 2020, we went from being in fear, thinking the world was going to fall apart, to this realization that there was another need for our product," Conner states. "By 2023, we doubled the size of the company (in terms of revenue)." That kind of growth is almost unheard of, business experts said, for a legacy company like Anchor.

With its availability in times of trouble and its willingness to customize its products for various needs, Anchor has retained many

of the new clients it won during the pandemic. "Our revenue has come down a little since its height during COVID, but we're still far ahead of pre-2020," Conner offers.

"When people called us during that period in 2020, our shelves were full because we had kept production going," Mogavero relates. "We were there when those customers needed us. They haven't forgotten that. And honestly it felt great – for all of us here at Anchor – to be able to serve those people when they needed us most."

Conner asserts: The summer of 2020 "felt like it saved the company. And for two years we couldn't keep up."

Mogavero says there are lessons learned during COVID that have stuck with the company.

"It showed our sales reps instead of just counting on our (old) sales base, we can grow by seeking new markets for our stock products," she expresses. "It was a shift in mindset really for our entire company. It helped us realize there were a lot more markets we could capture."

All in the family

The current of change runs deep at Anchor Industries, which began as a small riverboat supply house located on the Ohio River. Founded as Anchor Supply Company, the buoyant business initially furnished oil, groceries, paint and other supplies to the steamboat trade.

Due to a growing demand for waterproof covers, Anchor's founders added canvas goods to the line of merchandise.

Today, with three production facilities encompassing 375,000 square feet in

Evansville – manned by 325 skilled team members – Anchor is one of the world's most respected manufacturers in every category in which it competes. Throughout its long history, Anchor has pioneered numerous industry-changing innovations.

In 2011, Anchor acquired Economy Tent International (ETI) in Miami, Florida, where the firm now has a manufacturing and frame tent sales facility employing an additional 35 people.

Anchor is owned by Carrie and Pete Mogavero. Pete has been the company's president for 30 years. Carrie is the great-granddaughter of Louis A. Daus, who co-founded the company with Peter Emrich. Christen Mogavero is the great-great granddaughter of Daus. The Emrich family is still involved as shareholders.

Those deep roots have led to "a customer base that is generational," Conner boasts. "And the bonds we have between us and our customers are very strong."

Anchor sells its products in all 50 U.S. states, and 90% of its sales are domestic. It also has strong followings in Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and Central and South America.

Ninety-five percent of its sales go through dealers, which often rent out the products to end users. Forty percent of Anchor's products are custom made, including a tent designed to fit around a 100-year-old oak tree and a luxurious tent using cutting-edge airbeam technology that was used for a gala on Carnegie Hall's rooftop.

The customization is just another tentacle to the company's willingness-to-change



Anchor Industries, a 133-year-old company, does the vast majority of its manufacturing in Evansville and is known for its ability to customize products (left). While it's serious business at Anchor's Indiana facility, it's also a family atmosphere with time built in to have fun and celebrate the employees' successes.

philosophy.

“Key to the company’s success has been 130-plus years of visionary leadership and willingness to change and evolve,” Christen Mogavero relates. “The range of our products has been critical. We’re not a one-trick pony. We’re willing to do custom work. And it’s not just about saying ‘yes’ to the customer. It’s about executing the job at hand to a T.”

Helping hand

The privately held, family-run business also has a long history of giving to its home community and celebrating its employees. With many of its off-shore competitors – who pay lower wages and are government subsidized – willing to undercut Anchor on price, the Evansville firm has insisted on paying its employees far better than a living wage. It also celebrates in seemingly smaller ways, such as an annual company Christmas meal, baseball outings, turkey bowling during Thanksgiving and regular employee birthday celebrations.

Anchor also emphasizes community outreach, including supporting more than 25 organizations including local schools and colleges, the Evansville Rescue Mission for the homeless, United Way of Southwestern Indiana, Habitat for Humanity, YMCA,



A luxurious tent using cutting-edge airbeam technology that was used for a New York City gala on Carnegie Hall’s rooftop earned Anchor Industries a major national award in 2015.

YWCA and others.

“The community has done so much for us, it’s only natural to give back,” Mogavero says. “And our employees bring us causes as well that we get involved in. This company is like a family, and we care about each other and the community where we live. This is how you show you care.”

The company also helps its own employees in need and the employees rally around one another when tragedy strikes. “That’s just part of the culture here,” Mogavero stresses. “That part of this company hasn’t changed. And that’s why we’ve had people work here 20, 30 or 40 years.”

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