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coatedcoil

Finishing touches

BY ABBE MILLER

At **Centria Coating Services**,
specialty orders are a welcome request

The word generic carries a negative connotation. There's nothing special or unique about it. It implies something that's made for the masses.

But Centria Coating Services, Moon Township, Pa., a full-service coil coater, is anything but common. According to Jim Dockey, director of sales and marketing, the company considers itself a boutique coater. "Whether it's smaller-quantity orders, higher-quality requirements or special coatings that don't run on higher-speed lines, we run the stuff that the other guys don't want to run or can't run," he says.

For shoppers that want something a little out of the ordinary, it's doubtful they would peruse the shelves at Wal-Mart. Likewise, for customers needing a specific coated product or an architectural metal wall or roofing system, the biggest producer out there might not always be the best.

Therefore, Centria has made it a goal to cater to the needs of the more discriminating customer. In the past five years, the company has implemented the latest technology and state-of-the-art equipment. It's beefed up its operations wherever necessary to ensure customers' needs are satisfied, no matter the request.

"We've gone through a tremendous amount of growth in our businesses," says Dockey. "We've added the resources, including personnel in outside and inside sales and customer service support. We're doing all of that while staying true to our business model: To be the boutique coater that does the stuff that the other guys don't want to do."

Yielding results

In 2006, Centria made the decision to spend capital on the ovens at its Ambridge, Pa., facility. The expenditure was inspired by a need to improve the efficiency of the ovens and to increase the capacity of the coating line. The success at that plant sparked similar investments at its Cambridge, Ohio, location in January.

"Their coating line successfully runs our products for us," says Karen Kish, vice president of sales at Flexospan Steel Buildings Inc., Sandy Lake, Pa., a manufacturer of industrial metal roofing and siding, purlins and girts in steel and stainless steel, complete pre-engineered steel buildings and self-storage buildings. "We have some tough coating orders to

process due to the thickness of vinyl plastisol paints. This thickness is required for extremely corrosive atmospheres in industrial facilities. Centria is capable of slower line times mandated for the premium quality we demand. Their service is excellent, and their quality control is outstanding."

Flexospan is a longtime customer of Centria and sources nearly 90 percent of its coated material from the company. The majority of those orders are steel, and the finishes include the thicker plastisol, as well as more common coatings such as Kynar coatings and siliconized polyesters. No matter the coating, however, the goal is for both parties to get the most out of the material.

"One of the benefits we have, based on how our lines are configured and just the mindset of our productivity, is that we have better yields," Dockey explains. "When you have a line that runs a lot faster than our lines, like some of the bigger competitors do, it gives them some challenges on smaller runs, yield in particular. A faster-speed line has more linear footage of coil in the line, and when it experiences a problem, it loses more prime product."

"With the cost of aluminum and steel so much

higher today than even three or four years ago, every percentage point of yield is critical to the overall profitability for our customers," he says. "Our focus is 100 percent on yield. If you send us your coil, we want to give it all back to you and not lose 4 percent or 5 percent of it."

Centria has the in-house capabilities to coat steel in gauges from 0.009 inch to 0.079 inch, in widths from 18 inches to 62.5 inches, and it can handle aluminum from 0.017 inch to 0.08 inch thick in widths from 18 inches to 62.5 inches. Its equipment allows it to fulfill one-sided, two-sided or multi-pass orders. Coatings include acrylic, silicone polyester, epoxy, vinyl, fluoropolymer, metallic fluoropolymer, plastisol, urethane and manual- and solution-strippable films, as well as a multitude of customized-type systems, each formulated according to the needs of the company's wide variety of customers.

Exponential demand

When aluminum prices were more manageable, only 3 percent of Centria's business was devoted to that substrate. But with lightweighting efforts gaining popularity, alu-





Centria will match a customer's color requirements or can create a new color when the need arises.

minum sales at Centria have surged. Today, the company handles more aluminum than ever before. Forty percent of its coating division orders are for aluminum. The oven upgrades to its two coating facilities have made it possible to handle the increase in demand. But improving the coating equipment wasn't the only requirement necessary to ensure a successful run.

"We've done expansions to our warehouse infrastructure," says Dockey. "We have to handle aluminum in a special manner because it's more delicate. We've done some material handling upgrades and storage enhancements, while the oven upgrade certainly increased our capabilities with aluminum."

Centria has taken the necessary measures to accommodate the increase in aluminum orders. And all of these strides are garnering attention as longtime customers take notice. Alumet Supply Inc., Orange, N.J., a service center specializing in the distribution of aluminum products, receives more than 1 million pounds of coated aluminum coil each month from Centria. The company primarily requests polyester, acrylic and

fluorocarbon coatings in a variety of colors and gloss levels.

"Centria can satisfy 99 percent of Alumet Supply's coil coating needs and can also attend to our processing needs, such as slitting and embossing," says Tim Donohue, vice president and general manager at Alumet. "The most important factor to us as a coil coating customer is quality. Centria has continually, over the several years we've done business with them, invested in paint line upgrades and has achieved a quality control track record that's second to none."

Alumet has been a customer of Centria since 2000, and the aluminum product it sources through the company feeds into many industries. Commercial building products, signage, transportation and light-

ing are just a few of those markets.

"We've changed the mix of our business," Dockey says. "The additional capacity allowed us to do that in markets that fit our capabilities or niche. We've found that aluminum is one of those types of businesses to focus on, and we've focused on it,

specifically working with service centers, mills and trading companies."

Whether it's steel or aluminum, thick coatings or thin, Centria's mix of discerning customers keeps the company striving to stand apart from the competition. By doing so, it's able to maintain its self-described status as a boutique provider. Business is anything but bland. ■

Alumet Supply Inc., Orange, N.J.,
973/675-8400, fax: 973/675-6161,
www.alumetsupply.com.

Centria, Moon Township, Pa., 800/759-7474,
www.centria.com, e-mail: info@centria.com.

Flexospan Steel Buildings Inc., Sandy Lake, Pa., 800/245-0396, fax: 724/376-3864,
www.flexospan.com,
e-mail: sales@flexospan.com.