

## Helping Distributors Finish First

Published in Industrial Supply Magazine, January/February 2013

In 2012, Osborn celebrated its 125th year in business. The company got its start making horse and butcher block brushes in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1887 and has since grown into an international supplier of surface treatment solutions and finishing tools.

Over the past 125 years, Osborn's product offerings grew through several line expansions and additions from the few original product designs that John J. Osborn purchased when founding Osborn. Early in the company's history it began to make brushes for use in the foundry industry and for street cleaning. As national and industry needs changed, so did the company's products.

Osborn grew within Northeast Ohio as well as establishing operations nationally, then internationally. Today, Osborn serves diverse groups of customers and industries in more than 120 countries with operations in 15 countries.

### **One Osborn, one team**

Osborn rebranded itself in the spring of 2012 to unify its many divisions and communicate a focused approach to providing the markets that it serves with exceptional performance. Prior to rebranding, different divisions of the company were operating separately, and in many cases, duplicating efforts. With a philosophy of "one Osborn, one team," all divisions are now one group.

Today, Osborn carries more than 10,000 standard products and more than 100,000 customized solutions in several categories, including welding, metal fabrication, automotive and maintenance as well as LoadRunners idler rollers. Osborn produces a full line of metal finishing brushes, maintenance brushes and brooms as well as sealants, lubricants, coatings and cleaners. Drawing on customer needs and technological innovation, Osborn created a full line of ATB (Advanced Technology Brushing) abrasive filament brushes that involve the engineering of abrasive nylon into flexible tools for today's highly refined finishing processes. ATB products include wheel, disc, end and internal brushes and NovoFlex ball hones. This variety of products serves customers in the following markets: metal processing, manufacturing, pipeline/energy, welding, construction, maintenance and many others.

As Osborn's new tagline, "Osborn. Finish. First." communicates, the company extends its goals of exceptional performance into distributor programs and support, helping distributors finish first with their customers who choose Osborn products.



*Osborn's ATB (Advanced Technology Brushing) abrasive filament brushes engineer abrasive nylon into flexible tools for highly refined finishing processes.*



*Osborn's technical service engineers work closely with end users and distributors to solve application problems and provide training.*

welding and motor-driven vehicle markets.

“We’re striving to help the end user have the right product for their applications and working closely with our distributors is one of the best ways to accomplish that,” explained Johnson. “We recognize the ‘four Ps’ that distributors need for the best value are product performance, programs, people and price. Osborn products offer the optimal performance for the right prices, but without the programs and knowledgeable people in place, it won’t matter.”

Johnson also explained that Osborn’s global operations have a direct, positive effect on local and regional distributors.

“Our global footprint directly affects quality for all distributors carrying Osborn. When we’re manufacturing a product, we consider where in the world is the best place to manufacture the product and get it into the marketplace in the most cost-effective manner,” said Johnson. “That way end users can have the right product for the right application at the right price. The price and availability directly affect a distributor anywhere in the world.”

Osborn’s dedication to distributor and customer support extends beyond a customer service department. The company’s team of technical service engineers has two teams, one dedicated to support for brush products and the other dedicated to support for buf/compound/abrasive products.

### **Technical support with real-world experience**

“Our support team is composed of people with real-world experience in our customers’ fields,” said Bob Pinchot, director of technical services at Osborn. “Not only do they know Osborn products, they understand how they are being used and what they are being used to accomplish.”

### **Commitment to distributor partners**

“At Osborn, we want to provide value to our distributors as well as our customers,” said Mark Johnson, vice president of sales and marketing at Osborn. “When we refreshed the Osborn brand, we also rekindled the commitment to our distributor partners and strive to provide them with the information and materials that they need in order to be successful.”

Osborn works with distributors in many ways to provide information including on-site training sessions and product comparison materials, such as its recent brochure comparing Osborn’s Standard, Professional and Premium brush lines to aid in selecting the right brush for the right application as well as market-specific product guides for the primary metals,

Osborn's technical service engineers work with end users as well as distributors to solve application problems and help with selecting the appropriate product for a variety of applications.

"Distributors have the same goal as Osborn in that they want to fully support their customers," Pinchot said. "We want to give them the advantage through offering value, quality, delivery and support for them and our shared customers."

Pinchot explained that the technical service team receives most problem-solving inquiries through distributors and inside sales representatives.

"In one situation, a distributor contacted the technical service team about a customer who was having a deburring and finishing problem with the product that had been originally specified for the job. The problem was that our product was actually leaving too smooth

of a finish when deburring, and the end user wasn't able to have a proper seal with a gasket," Pinchot said. "A couple of our technical service engineers went out to the distributor to meet with them and the end user about the problem. They were able to recommend switching from the nylon-filament ATB product to a stainless steel wire product that wouldn't leave as fine of a finish, which solved the sealing failure the customer was experiencing.

"This situation ended up producing a customized solution, which we are more than happy to design. Our service team is there to solve problems, whether it involves one of our products or not," Pinchot continued. "Quality is our number one goal. We want to make a quality product that is safe for customers to use, that distributors are proud to offer."

#### **Custom solutions provide end-user value**

"In every category, Osborn customizes a significant number of products," Johnson said. "The ability to have the solution that customers need created specifically for them is part of the value we bring to the market. The people and technical support along with the products and prices are what create the Osborn advantage."

Johnson reported that after the company's rebranding and with its continued growth, Osborn is actively adding to its teams that work with distributors. "Putting those people in place is all a



*Polishing compound being produced at Osborn's Hamilton, Ohio facility.*



*Sewing operation for buffs at the Richmond, Indiana facility.*

part of rekindling that commitment to excellent performance.”

As Osborn passes its 125th milestone and moves into 2013, the company plans to continue using its global resources and local support to work with distributors of all types and create solutions that allow the end user to improve productivity.

“One of the future plans that I’m excited about is improving our online presence with a truly global website that incorporates a fresh, new look,” said Johnson. “This year we’ll continue to work within the framework of integrity, partnership and commitment to lean manufacturing practices that Osborn has set to provide solutions that give our partners and customers excellent performance.”

*This article originally appeared in the Jan./Feb. 2013 issue of **Industrial Supply** magazine. Copyright 2013, Direct Business Media.*