



Continuity in the Midst of Change

Long-time Employee Gains Broader Responsibilities

Working for a company through three different owners brings challenges *and* rewards. After 27 years of working for Porter Seal Company and its successor, Inland Valley Rubber, Curtis Stull knows a few things about making transitions. Inland Valley Rubber was a manufacturer of molded rubber products specializing in rubber-to-metal bonding for the industrial, electronic, and oil and gas industries. Stull's experience with the company has led to greater opportunity through its most recent transition.

END-TO-END BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE

Stull's first job from high school was x-raying pipes in oil refineries. In 1981 he went to work for Porter Seal Company in Glendale, California, a distributor and manufacturer of O-rings, custom molded rubber parts, and metal-to-rubber bonded parts. The business moved to Ontario, California in 1986, operating there until 1991.

In 1991 Porter Seal introduced a new line of molded silicone products and sold the other division of the business to Inland Valley Rubber. Stull's familiarity with customers and broad operational experience enabled him to make the shift to new ownership. With responsibilities for sales, purchasing, accounting, and quality control, Stull became a general manager.

In late 2007, the owner decided to sell Inland Valley Rubber and began entertaining potential buyers. Sanders Industries made an offer and acquired the company, closing the deal in November 2008.

A NEW CHAPTER

"As with any change, customers and employees are always concerned," said Stull, former general manager at Inland Rubber, now controller for Alloy Die Casting, another Sanders Industries company. "Sanders was very professional and followed through on all of the promises they made. We kept comparable benefits, and the employees were very professional and welcoming to us."

The existing team ran the business as usual through the end of the year and then began a well-thought-out transition plan. Inland Valley Rubber's operations were moved to Gardena, California, to be merged with Rubbercraft, another Sanders Industries company. Stull played a key role in integrating Inland Valley Rubber's accounts with the Rubbercraft business. During the transition he worked closely with the engineering team to help them set up systems, explain the costing structure, identify product configurations, and establish connections with sourcing suppliers. As the systems were migrated, he worked as a liaison with the inside sales team in the factory to help assure follow-up and on-time deliveries.

"We were able to successfully reassure customers that they would continue to receive high quality products and timely deliveries, regardless of the transition," said Stull. "They wouldn't have to qualify other vendors for key products. As a result, we have retained our customer base." Inland Valley Rubber brought new customers to Rubbercraft for a wide range of products including oil field products, aircraft latches, gas valve, connectors, and quick disconnects.

NEXT STEP: CONTROLLER

Sanders Industries then offered Stull the position of controller at a division of the company that was located closer to his residence. Stull accepted, and after training a replacement, made the move to Alloy Die Casting. The new position has further broadened Stull's experiences and given him opportunity to learn more aspects of finance and business management.

"I've learned a lot," he said. "Sanders Industries companies are larger than my previous company and I've gained new product knowledge. We also have more structured financial reporting, more rigorous quality systems, and metrics for tracking on-time delivery. When it came to making the shift to the new company, I really appreciate the fact that at Sanders, people say what they'll do and then do what they say."