

Member Profile

Member Profile: Pawling Corporation

Founded: 1945

Location: Pawling, NY and Wassaic, NY

Website: www.pawling.com , www.presray.com

When Pawling Rubber Company was founded in 1945 by Raymond Thornburg and Smith Johnson, there were fifteen employees manufacturing gaskets for ammunition cases for the military in a 25,000 square foot building. Since that time the company has evolved in to Pawling Corporation -Engineered Products Division, Pawling Corporation – Architectural Products Division, and Presray Corporation with a combined workforce of over 300 employees and two plants totaling 400,000 square feet of manufacturing space. The transition wasn't always easy.

In the beginning Pawling Rubber Company manufactured basic rubber extrusions, but as the business grew, it became more vertically integrated. They began mixing their own rubber and added several product lines such as matting, wall protection systems, and inflatable rubber seals. In 1955, Presray Corporation was acquired, adding the niche business of highly technical rubber seals used in applications such as aerospace, nuclear power, and powder bulk manufacturing equipment. By broadening their focus, Pawling Corporation was able to avoid the fate of many of their early competitors, who focused solely on supplying the automotive industry, and who eventually found themselves bankrupt.



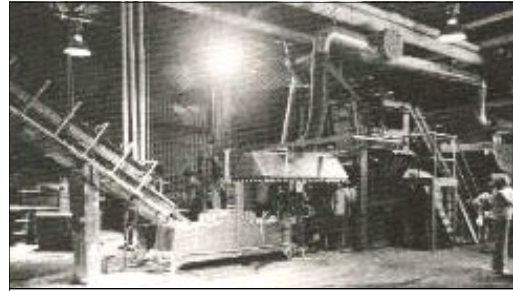
Women assembling Parco – Link mats in the 1940's.

It is this diversification into a variety of sectors that has helped Pawling survive the ups and downs of the past sixty-five years. Throughout this time there have been many successes with the company branching out into new product lines, but there have also been painful failures. A key set back occurred in the early 1970s when a roof over the Rubber Mixing Department collapsed from ice buildup and a week later potentially salvageable ingredients were lost to a flood. The silver lining to this story is that it helped spur the development of Presray's flood barriers.

In 2005, the company was reorganized into two main business groups: Pawling Engineered Products and Pawling Protective Systems. The Engineered Products group is located in Pawling, New York and manufactures a spectrum of technical rubber and silicone seals and gaskets that are used in dozens of industries, from the critical seals in a nuclear power plant to seals used in equipment which manufacturer semiconductors. The Protective Systems Division is located in Wassaic, New York and supplies impact protection products and specialty doors sold in the construction industry. The most prevalent product from this group would be the wall guards, handrails, corner guards, and protective wall sheeting found in most hospitals and nursing homes. While the two business groups operate independent of each other, the overall entity comprises Pawling Corporation.

Pawling Corporation continually has development projects underway to ensure that their products remain relevant and competitive.

The Architectural Products Division is currently working on replacing entire product lines of PVC plastic products with other materials deemed more “green.” According to Jason Smith, president of Pawling Corporation’s Architectural Division and Presray Corporation, “This is a very large initiative that requires new material formulations, new machinery, new tooling, new certifications by agencies such as UL (Underwriters Laboratory), and essentially a new outlook on the whole manufacturing process. We have made large investments to undertake these types of initiatives, but we feel the payback, both financial and competitive, will be acceptable.” The Engineered Products Division has a project in the works as well which will aid the growing environmental testing industry.



A Banbury mixer in the Custom Mixing Division in the 1980’s.

Besides staying on the cutting edge of technology, it is also important to stay on top of the various regional issues, federal regulations, legal and political trends that can make manufacturing a difficult proposition, especially in New York State. Pawling Corporation has been a member of the Council of Industry since 1952 and has come to rely on the Council’s training programs to keep their staff educated on the full spectrum of ever changing regulatory laws to remain compliant. “Other non-regulatory training programs such as the Six Sigma courses on Lean Manufacturing represent the most current management training available anywhere,” Smith explained. “Just like we try to do with our business, the Council of Industry works hard to stay current and competitive in a fast changing landscape.”

Pawling Corporation has a global market for their products and this is an area where many companies have difficulty, especially since manufacturing in New York State is significantly more expensive compared with many other areas of the world. Pawling feels the key is to stay out of products and industries that have been commoditized by the flood of low cost providers. “We have had to get out of some of our traditional rubber manufacturing capabilities in response to these pressures. For our more niche products, global competition is a double edged sword,” said Smith. “When it makes sense we outsource manufacturing to lower cost areas in order to maintain a competitive advantage. In general, this era of global competition has led to us taking a rather militant view of cost control and overhead expenditures. This is the reality of our times.”

Yet Pawling Corporation is doing well in these times. They are a company that is easy to do business with (and that isn’t always easy). They want the process to be smooth for customers from looking at the website or brochures, to finding and ordering replacement parts. The key is good clear marketing materials, quality products, and competitive pricing, all supported by reliable customer service. Of course this takes a lot of hard work performed by their dedicated workforce. “I am continually impressed and proud of the work our employees undertake,” Smith said.

It is not just any one thing that has made Pawling Corporation successful for the past sixty five years, it is the combination of diversification, vision, dedication and hard work that has kept the company continually growing, evolving and thriving.