

ROCHESTER TOP 100

Employee ownership key to firm's growth

H&C Tool Supply was founded in 1955; the firm has 34 staffers

By LORI GABLE

Pride in ownership is the foundation of the H&C Tool Supply Corp., President Donald Waltzer said, and the owners are the employees.

Founded in 1955, the company is a distributor of metalworking tools and fasteners to manufacturers, including the Hewes Fastener division. H&C became 100 percent employee-owned in 2011 and has experienced steady growth each year since then.

H&C Tool Supply Corp.

Distributor of metalworking tools and fasteners

Year founded: 1955

Top executive: Donald Waltzer, president

Current employment: 34

2014 ranking: 67

Headquarters: Rochester

Websites: www.hctoolsupply.com; www.hewesfastener.com

Revenues grew by 25 percent in 2012, 21 percent in 2013 and 7 percent in 2014. Growth has expanded to areas of service and product offerings as well.

"H&C started as a distributor of quality metalworking tools focused on Rochester-based tool-and-die companies," Waltzer said. "Through acquisition and organic growth, we have added product categories such as fasteners, metal cutting fluids and a wide variety of general industrial supplies."

Waltzer sees H&C in the middle of the supply chain, with major suppliers such as Kennametal Inc. and Master Chemical



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

"Employee ownership helps us attract great people and give them a stake in our success," says President Donald Waltzer, left, with Tony Mannillo, vice president of sales, and Ken Brankline, cutting tools division manager, at right.

Corp. constantly developing new technological products that his company can apply to customers' problems.

Working as a team creates meaningful partnerships and long-lasting relationships, he said.

"We believe that we provide real value for our customers and look forward to doing more for a growing list of manufacturing companies who thrive with us as their partners," Waltzer explained. "This is a people business, and employee ownership helps us attract great people and give them a stake in our success."

Employee growth continues to be steady, increasing by at least 10 percent each year since 2012. The firm has 34 employees, up from 28 in 2012.

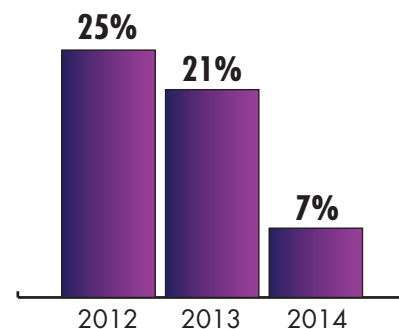
"As we grow, we will continue to add talented people," Waltzer said. "We are strongly committed to Rochester, central

and western New York. Our employee-owners live here, work here, and we are in this for the long haul."

The business is not without its challeng-

By the numbers

The company's revenues have grown each of the past three years.



es, though, he points out.

"There are huge changes happening in our industry. Some of these include unfair trade and its pressure on American manufacturers—very large competitors, old and new, the trend for these companies to make national deals that affect our local market, and Internet providers who attempt to commoditize all products."

But Waltzer sees potential in these changes, noting good competitors help make his company even stronger.

"We are always looking for opportunities. We want to find what other people aren't doing and then provide that as a service," he said.

Gauging customer satisfaction is a large part of the job for Kenneth Brankline, divi-

sion manager of cutting tools. He has been with H&C for eight years and is responsible for supervising the inside sales team and monitoring inventory.

"We don't wait for complaints. We periodically send anonymous surveys to customers to find out what they think," Brankline said. "If the feedback is good, we say thanks. If it's negative, we work until we make it right."

The part of the job he likes best is partnering with manufacturers to learn how they suit customers' needs the best.

"We represent many," Brankline said. "We like to pick the one that is the best match for each individual customer."

Helping customers succeed is part of the H&C commitment to the resurgence

of American manufacturing, Waltzer said.

"The best reward we get is when a customer calls and says we need you—only you can help us. That is the ultimate reward, to know we're viewed that way. I'm proudest of that. It's all part of that ownership culture."

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The Rochester Top 100 program is presented by the Rochester Business Alliance Inc. and KPMG LLP. Launched in 1987, it recognizes the fastest-growing private companies in Greater Rochester. The 2015 Rochester Top 100 event will be held Nov. 4. For more information, go to rochesterbusinessalliance.com.