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SEAMS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

In this edition of SEAMS Member Spotlight, Dunlap Industries is featured. Questions are answered by Marketing Supervisor & Sales Associate Gaylen A. Hamilton; Sales Manager Ashby Graham; and President Robert J. Kwasnik.

DUNLAP Industries, Inc.

Company headquarters: Dunlap, TN

Year founded: 1966

Primary specialties: Zippers, hook & loop, thread other related trim items

Number of employees: 65+

Brief company history:

Dunlap Industries was founded in cooperation with the University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Valley Authority, originally making Flint metal zippers. In the 1980s, hook & loop was added to the product line. This was followed by the addition of the U.S. Thread division in the 1990s. Today, Dunlap Industries is one of the few remaining

American-owned manufacturers in the market. It supplies multiple industries with zippers, hook & loop, thread, tapes and other trims from its domestic and international facilities.

Markets served:

Apparel, Medical, Transportation, Mattress & Bedding, Furniture, Tactical / Safety / Service, Sporting goods, Luggage and bags, Petcare, Tailoring, and others.

Challenges and opportunities?

“Some of our challenges, and those facing the industry, are competing on an international level against lower labor rates, government subsidies and, now, how to incorporate tariffs. We understand that our industry is constantly evolving and we work to continually adapt to changing landscapes and customer expectations and needs.

“Dunlap works to build from 59 years of industry experience, worldwide operations and a wide product line to offer a collaborative, long-term relationship with our customers and business partners. Our experienced sales and support professionals work to make our sewn products manufacturing partners’ job easier by learning about the design and application of their product(s) and tailoring our recommendations to help maximize its performance, marketability, value, and/or profitability … whatever your priorities might be.”

Company’s differentiators:

“Dunlap Industries is committed to providing the best service and value in the industry … working as your partner to understand and meet customer needs; gaining an understanding of how the product(s) will be used or need to perform, as well as the best balance between price, quality and where and when it is needed; and striving to get you what you want, where you want it when you need it.”

“We manufacture and distribute a wide range of products to fit your needs. Products can be customized to meet your specific requirements ... from lengths, to colors, to treatments and packaging.

Dunlap’s automated ordering system allows us to offer: Stocking Programs, Real-Time Delivery Dates and Quick Delivery. The talented people who work in our distribution facilities oversee every aspect of the delivery process, including organizing, packing, logistics, shipping and delivery. They work tirelessly so that you get your products where you need them, when you need them.”

“Quality control is of the utmost importance, and we strive to deliver consistent quality with every order. In addition to ISO certifications, our Dunlapworld quality control program is implemented at every facility in our network. Our engineers and factory staff are constantly at work to ensure that every product we produce meets or exceeds our very strict standards.

“Dunlap Industries’ customers are very likely to work with the same sales and customer service representatives for their entire career. Our employee retention creates a truly collaborative business partnership and allows Dunlap to create a tailored customer experience.”

“Dunlap Industries represents more than a job to us and that translates into how we operate daily. Our customer’s quality of experience and satisfaction is our primary goal.”

Thoughts on the Made-in-America/Americas movement and what strategy to

remain competitive in the U.S. and this hemisphere:

“The Made-in-America/Americas movement emphasizes resilient, trusted and strategically independent supply chains, supported by U.S. policies and consumers who value quality and community impact. Since 1966, Dunlap Industries has been committed to providing U.S. jobs and manufacturing American-made products, and will continue manufacturing in the United States. To stay competitive in the U.S. and the wider region, we have invested in efficiency and technology to counter higher local costs. Dunlap has also built a diversified regional supply base focused on verifiable quality, strong compliance, and faster, more predictable reliability rather than just low prices.”

Biggest challenges and opportunities for manufacturing in the USA:

“There are several challenges, from rising costs for labor, materials and capital that squeeze margins and complicate pricing to skill gaps within the manufacturing industry, as well as the need to onboard new, younger employees and train all employees to use modernized machinery.”

“Much of our industry is driven by legislation, the brands and retailers sourcing decisions and, predominately, by the consumer who directs us with their wallet and their frequent choice of price over manufacturing origin.”

“As the next generation of designers, sourcing staff and purchasing agents enter our industries, how they interact and perform their jobs is creating some of the changes and the need to make adjustments to best serve them.”

“There are also major opportunities in the rapid adoption of automation, robotics and AI to offset labor shortages and improve efficiency.”

“Reshoring and near-shoring provides some shorter-term opportunities. Some of the production processes being worked on to allow faster, less expensive and smaller, more personalized batches could draw more manufacturing back to the U.S.”

Business outlook for Dunlap and future growth plans:

“While many of our markets are experiencing flat or declining business, we are working to control costs, gain efficiencies and grow business where we can.”

“Like many in our industry, we too are dealing with the challenge of our older, more experienced employees nearing retirement age. Thankfully, we have invested significant resources into retaining this knowledge through the development of diverse process documentation and cross-training of our team members in all departments.”

“We have been very intentional regarding this transition and now are excited about the benefits we can offer through our multi-generational commitment and cooperative effort.”

“Younger team members, with their varied and continuously gained experience, bring energy and fresh ideas to our older team members with years of knowledge and experience who, in turn, are able to provide support and insights as ongoing training."

“As a family owned and operated company, we are very fortunate to have Ashby Graham, President Robert Kwasnik’s stepson, operating as Dunlap’s Sales and Marketing Manager and Simon Parker, Vice President Mike Kwasnik’s and Robert’s nephew, as one of our newer sales associates. Both represent the company’s third generation and its commitment to Dunlap’s vision for serving the textile industry.”

“In addition, our management team will help take us to greater heights. They also include Quality & Maintenance Manager, Steve Lawson, Accounting and HR Manager, Betty Farley and Finance and Inventory Manager, Michael Barker, who bring decades of industry experience. Michael splits the generations while Operations Manager, Shelly Smith, is an experienced, but younger part of the team.”

Factors that allow Dunlap to remain competitive in the apparel and sewn textile products market:

“Dunlap’s high-quality product and competitive pricing allow us to remain a top player in the apparel and sewn textile product market. Our ever-evolving creative team keeps Dunlap progressive both in quality, service and value.”

Value SEAMS brings to Dunlap:

“SEAMS gives Dunlap Industries the opportunity to stay current with industry developments, from regulatory and legislation updates to supplier innovations and evolving consumer demands. SEAMS periodicals and tradeshows both inform us on how to offer the best possible product for the market, as well as bring us together to find ways to work as a unified industry for the benefit of all.”