

TRANSMISSION

D I G E S T

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Room to Grow





CONSOLIDATED
VEHICLE CONVERTERS

4991 HEMPSTEAD STATION DRIVE

Room to Grow

For the past three years, the owners and employees of Consolidated Vehicle Converters (CVC) have been undergoing a transformation – a transformation made possible by a new facility. The move, which took place some two years ago, has had a profound effect on every aspect of the company's manufacturing processes, inventory system and the end products themselves.

A pioneer of torque-converter remanufacturing, John Maynard sold his Dayton, Ohio-based MAMCO Converter Co. in 1994. However, a few family members wanted to continue the work they had learned from John. So, in 1996, John's daughters, Julie Maynard-Turner and Marcia Maynard-Prugh, opened CVC. Soon, Marcia's husband, Tim Prugh, joined the company at an aging 20,000-square-foot plant.

Says Tim Prugh, the company's general manager: "I really don't know how we did it in that old build-



Quality remanufactured converters start with clean, true and flat surfaces.

ing. Often I'll visit one of our departments in our new facility – say, for instance, our warehouse – where I look and try to figure out just how we were ever able to fit that function into 1,000 square feet. The changes brought about by moving into our new, more-spacious plant are overwhelming! How did we handle bonding without the space we have currently? Every day we have those thoughts and we realize that, even if we had to, we couldn't work in those cramped quarters again.

"Just take a look at our sub-work. Clutches, for instance, require several steps: The old material has to be removed, the surfaces prepared; then and only



With 82,000 square feet, the CVC facility allows ample room for subassembly areas.

then does a bonding of the new material take place. Today the process is much more sophisticated; there are an increased number of variances of friction materials being introduced from the OEMs. The days of 'one paper fits all' are gone forever. Engineers are using characteristics of various friction papers to change or enhance the characteristics of the converter's operation.

"Stators are another area of concentration. We completely disassemble and then rebuild them with all new rollers and springs. This department probably represents the biggest area of improvement that we've

been able to make since we moved to the new plant."

CVC has grown to about 90 employees and will re-manufacture almost 200,000 converters this year. Responsibility for production falls on the shoulders of Julie, who oversees the overall, daily operation. Julie observes: "It's a family business. We take so much pride in the products that roll off our lines that we are willing to spend the 60 to 70 hours weekly to make it happen for our customers. This is what we have to do to achieve the reliability that our customers have come to expect from us – it just requires a lot of hard work."

John Sr. & Tim did much of the "heavy lifting" when it came to the plant relocation and production-line redesign. Prugh is also charged with all administration, cataloging and traffic functions as well.

Marcia spends most of her time at the final stations of the company's production lines where converters are painted, inspected, tested and then released to finished-goods inventory. She says that close attention to detail results in a failure rate of less than 0.5%. She also supervises the purchasing, making sure every component needed for rebuilding more than 1,000 models and variations of converters is on hand when needed.

With more than 40 years in the converter business, Julie and Marcia's father, John, acts in a consulting role for the company, paying particular attention to the machining processes that must be specified each time a new variation or model of converter is encountered.

"Our tooling department, responsible for turning the ideas into production-line capabilities, has grown from one to now five toolmakers," Tim Prugh said.



In the critical bonding subassembly work area, torque-converter pistons are prepared to receive new friction material.



The remanufactured converter always starts as a core. The factory's core-inventory area is for quick-moving inventory. Less-popular unit cores are stored in containers adjacent to the plant.

"John, in his role as consultant, is clearly the 'go-to guy' when we need to address a recurring problem. It takes someone with his vast experience who has encountered many similar problems before to come up with the best fix possible. John maintains that OEMs are turning out multiple variations of similar converters at a never-before-seen rate. It seems that there's something unique in the torque converter for nearly every make-and-model combination that uses them."

Another Maynard family member, John Jr., works with the CVC fleet of delivery trucks and often drives one of the routes himself.

In addition to remanufactured stock converters,



A separate subassembly area is devoted to preparing stators for the final-assembly stations.

CVC supplies performance/racing converters and a line of medium-duty, 600 series Allison remanufactured clutches. Prugh says the company continues to do well with the racing and performance units, estimating that they ship 75 to 100 units per month.

CVC chooses to do business through a distributor network that includes more than 30 locations in the U.S. and is currently in negotiations with a Canadian distributor.

"We find there is a lot of interest from people who are looking for converters for any number of reasons,"



At CVC the remanufacture lines move components between assembly stations.



The turbine subassembly area.



Approaching the end of the assembly line, assembled converters receive a coat of paint and are labeled for entry into the inventory system.



On the final-assembly line, the converter outer body is welded.

Tim says. "There are those who are independent parts distributors, traditional parts houses and even some production rebuilders of transmissions that want to concentrate on their core business and prefer to treat torque converters as a sub-assembly. There's plenty of opportunity for us to find new customers and grow our production. When a retail shop specifically wants to use our converter – and there are more of these all the time – we immediately put them in contact with our nearest distributor.

"There is any number of ways a shop may become familiar with our converters. They may have one that comes with a transmission unit that has been built by one of the volume transmission builders or by visiting our Web site. Every month we are receiving more and

more calls from rebuilders who are actively looking for CVC converters. Our business model is to sell exclusively through distributors; however, if we get a request from someone in an area where there is no representation, we will make sure our products are available to them on a direct basis. The West Coast is one of our faster-growing regions, and if this trend continues we will most likely need to add another truck and driver to specifically serve those markets."

Working with the family is a cadre of very experienced employees, Tim says. "We have a significant number of long-term employees. They are without question the most-valued asset we have. We are not big on handing out lots of titles, but we have a crew of professionals who have been with us a long, long time. They really understand what we want to accomplish and are very good at getting it done. Perhaps our mission statement sums it up the best for all of us at CVC: 'Achieving Success By Placing The Customer First.'"

And, accomplishments are key to the continued growth path that CVC has laid out for itself. Looking forward, Tim says: "During the coming summer, in all likelihood we will have our fourth production line up and running. That will enable us to take the low-volume work off our current line number three. We're going to need the full production capacity of line three in order to keep up with what we are forecasting our future needs to be. We are aggressively projecting that within the next six to 12 months we will achieve an output of 1,000 units a day."

Considering the company's rapid growth and the expansion of facilities, Prugh concludes: "We thought we were doing a good job before; in fact, we were doing a good job. But, now I know we're doing a great job!" **TD**



The finished units are boxed and readied for shipment.