



BY JOHN LOOS

RESPECT

THE ROLL

Respect your elders. This sentiment isn't always easy to adhere to in a world obsessed with youth. Fortunately for companies and brands, there's no such thing as corporate arthritis or manufacturer osteoporosis. In fact, many times a company or a brand only gets stronger and more flexible as the years pass.

In the world of business, and particularly in the metals industry, experience is invaluable. The longer a name has

been around, the better it knows how to stick around.

When purchasing manufacturing machines, such as a roll forming system or any of its various components, a sense of history can make all the difference. Although the Formtek Group, Cleveland, is a relatively new name, it's the umbrella for roll forming brands that have hundreds of years of combined experience, and the company applies this ac-

cumulated wisdom to every custom machine it provides.

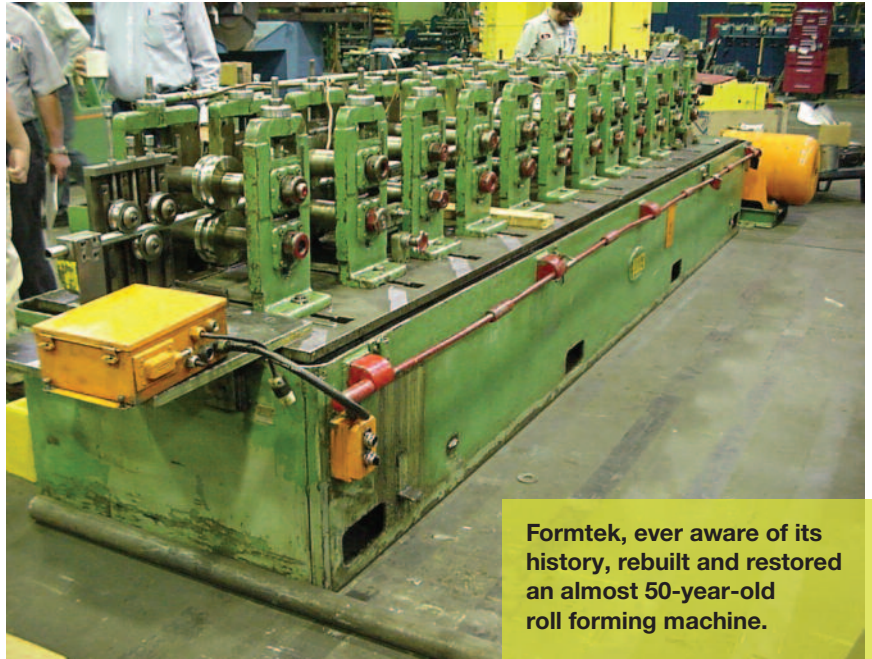
When asked what makes Formtek's roll forming systems and products stand out, Jack Pennuto Jr., sales manager, says, "It's really our history and the variety of the products that we've provided over time. It gives us a huge repository of previous applications to pull from when looking at a future product or need for the customer."

Two of Formtek's brands, Yoder and Tishken, are approaching their 100th anniversaries in the roll forming business, while two others, B&K and Dahlstrom Industries, have nearly 50 years' experience each. Yoder, established in 1910, made mud flaps for Ford's famous Model T. Obviously, technology and market demands have shifted dramatically since then, and Yoder, and thus Formtek, has adapted along with them.

Continued customs

Formtek's roll form brands specialize in custom solutions for the metals industry, meaning the company's reach is broad and varied. From complete lines for applications such as furniture, trucks and trailers, steel doors, or steel shelves and racks, to specific dies such as roller, in-line or flying cutoff, the company has a wealth of solutions across its brands. And, subsequently, a wealth of knowledge, as well.

"What's most beneficial about our company to the customer is if they're new to their relationship with roll forming, or if they have a product that they



Formtek, ever aware of its history, rebuilt and restored an almost 50-year-old roll forming machine.

FORMTEK's focus on customization and new technologies proves some brands only get better with age

make in small quantities at a brake press or a fabricator shop and they want to switch to a higher production, we can be a resource for them," says Pennuto. Formtek can suggest small design changes based on a customer's product, production process, tolerances or materials being roll formed.

Combined, the Formtek brands spread across an impressive breadth of products and capabilities. Whether it's a complete line, rebuild, upgrade, retrofit,

tooling or just bare machines, Formtek's brands can be adapted to meet varied production needs.

But why is this focus on variety so important? "I think it's because of the versatility that the customers need now," says Pennuto. "In the past, all they had were the roll formers that were available, and they had to make that work with their processes. Now, [customers] want more versatility because they don't know what's next. They're going to design for a certain process that they can fit on their existing equipment, but next week they'll get an inquiry for something that's not going to work. They need the flexibility to expand the machinery that they have."

History of satisfaction

Perhaps most valuable to a manufacturer is a tried and true relationship with a customer. American Roll Formed Products Corp., Painesville, Ohio, has a relationship with Yoder that precedes the inception of Formtek. American Roll Form is a company that understands the need for variety, being a full-service custom metal fabricator with capabilities that include roll forming, turret punching, press braking, robotic welding, stamping, powder coating, and assembly and packaging. For the past 40 years, it has worked closely with the Yoder brand to fulfill its diverse and evolving roll forming and tooling needs.

Because of this history with Yoder, and certainly enhanced by the present-day benefits of having so many companies under one Formtek umbrella, American Roll Form made the decision several years ago to buy the majority of its new equipment from Formtek. This included rafted mills, which allow the company to be more competitive because of decreased setup times.

"We're really impressed with their mills," says Rob Touzalin, president of American Roll Form. "Since we made the strategic decision to purchase only new, rafted-style mills, Formtek has been our mill of choice. We've bought a number of them in the past two years, and we particularly like their durability. Their rafted lines are easier to set up offline and by utilizing our overhead cranes, we make changeovers in about 20 percent of the time it once took us."

Touzalin also points to the company's swift lead times. "Particularly important to us is having a manufacturer deliver equipment when they say it will be there. Most times, when we order new equipment, there are jobs on this piece of equipment that are on a strict deadline. Formtek is particularly accurate with their delivery times, thus avoiding new product delivery issues."

American Roll Form has also been impressed with the quick-change capabilities of Formtek's roll forming equipment, which is essential for a company that



Formtek tube mill stands in the process of assembly.

changes over so many times per month. “Doing more than 130 setups per month makes these rafted lines much more important to us from a competitive standpoint,” says Touzalin.

“The other deciding factor in purchasing the Formtek equipment is the durability of their machines,” he continues. “Yoder has been around more than any other roll forming company. Other custom roll form brands out there are a much lighter duty and aren’t capable of surviving the robust schedule of a custom roll former. Custom roll formers traditionally take their equipment

to the limits, as they are running so many different sizes, shapes and gauges. Our Yoder equipment has stood the test of time.”

Finally, Touzalin points to the personal service Formtek provides as another benefit to purchasing its equipment.

“Formtek works closely with you if there’s a special mill you need for a specific application,” he says. “A while ago, we were looking for a special mill to run door frames, and we were looking to have [Formtek] build a special line with three zones, which allowed us to use one mill for a myriad of widths,

heights and gauges in the same roll forming line. This can save you considerable amounts of money on equipment and tooling, so the customer is able to afford American Roll Form to tool the sections.”

It would be easy for a company to sit back and coast on past successes, but that’s never been the style for any of Formtek’s brands. Still, the company is refining and enhancing its equipment line on both the big and small scale.

“In the last six months to a year, we’ve really made a push toward making the drive train of our roll forming machine more flexible and scalable so, in the future, it’s easier for our customer to add on to their machines as necessary and not have to buy all those capabilities up front,” says Pennuto.

With hundreds of years of combined experience under Formtek’s considerable belt, the company still continues to look forward to new technologies and solutions to ensure brands like Yoder and Tishken will be around for another 100 years. And that continued tenacity is worth respecting. ■



Tube-reducing machines are one of many types of equipment custom-made at Formtek.

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