

New ideas to support U.S. business

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“No one really knows we’re here or what we do,” says Darrell Huff of Huff Technologies. “We are a small company in a small town in a small state.”

Yet, Huff Technologies is working on some huge new custom concepts for some huge corporations.

They’re in the business of ideas...and custom equipment. Less than one year ago, American Greetings approached the company with a need. The company, who ships billions of greeting cards every year, needed a more efficient way to stack, load and transport their cards to the approximately 70,000 retail stores they supply in the United States.

“They needed to do something and couldn’t find anything to do the job,” said Huff. “We took their need and translated it into a machine that would do what they needed it to do.”

That machine is called the palletizer. Hooked on to a conveyor, this machine will stack a whole pallet of card boxes in an interlocking pattern of the company’s choice in 10 minutes. It is automatic and programmable to suit the efficiency needs for transport. And, it saves some poor soul from repetitive, backbreaking movement.

Previously, American Greetings hired one person per three shifts a day to bend and lift the heavy boxes onto the pallets. With preventive measures as the best defense against rising health costs and the price of just one back injury claim paralyzing, others couldn’t help but take notice.

“We’ve had a lot of interest from other companies,” said Huff, who is set to supply twelve of the palletizers to the Bardstown manufacturer and possibly more to its affiliated Arkansas warehouses. “One (Workman’s’ Comp) claim pays for all of these machines in one year.”

While the company cannot justify buying the piece of machinery for that reason alone, it is a cold, hard truth that American-owned businesses are competing to stay here in the U.S., to keep their manufacturing plants on U.S. soil.

“Companies have to cut costs and redundant jobs to compete overseas. They have no choice,” Huff stated. “This machine works 24/7; it doesn’t call in sick, or go on coffee break. It’s a win-win for them.”

Huff hopes that the palletizer might become a permanent project for the small business. “We don’t have one specific product, so we are looking for something we can always count on.”

At any given moment, the small team at Huff Technologies could be working on four to ten projects of various sizes.

Two years ago, Huff Technologies designed \$1.3 million mechanical engine assembly line. The custom piece for Kohler Engines was 530 feet, as long as one and a half football fields, and could assemble an engine every 23 seconds.

“It took the whole length of our building,” remembered Huff.

The company relies heavily on word-of-mouth advertising. Kohler came on board after touring a Polaris facility which featured one of Huff’s engine dynamometers, which measures torque and rotational speed (rpm) from an engine. Huff began building smaller dynamometers over ten years ago in his garage as a hobby. When demand grew he started the Union County based business where it stands now in Morganfield’s Industrial Park.

“We have worked into this point in our company,” said Huff. And as business grew, so did the need for more help.

Currently, Huff Technology employs ten—Huff, who does “big picture design,” design engineers, electrical engineers, machinists, and assemblers.

“It’s a challenge to create something that works and helps our customers,” determines Huff.