



Cheers to 30 years

Alex Fordham recently visited UTC Overseas, who this October celebrate 30 years in the can making business

As a veteran of the can making business of more than 35 years, Dean Temple, UTC Overseas' chief operating officer, has had to make a number of important decisions within his working life. He is keen to acknowledge that placing a job advert in the local paper just may be one of the best business decisions he ever made. Temple takes up the story:

"I started handling canning equipment in 1984, and we represented a German forwarder that was specialising in the transportation of aluminium

cans and equipment," he explains. "In 1988, the company asked if I would start a US operation specifically handling canning equipment.

"In 1988 I formed Rewico America, a subsidiary of Rewico in Germany. I was based in New York City and was essentially a one-man band.

"I put an advert in the paper, which you did in those days, for an executive manager Martha (Rojas) responded and here we are 30 years later. We joined forces in October 1988, and this October will be 30 years together, primarily

moving can making equipment around the world.”

The duo partnered with Ray Nash, CEO of Rewico and Bryan Fathauer, UTC vice president Midwest, and ever since have enjoyed a great working relationship. Rojas acts as vice president, director project development at UTC Overseas, and together with Temple they make up the public facing team that heads up UTC Overseas’ forwarding division for the can making industry. UTC Overseas itself is an international freight forwarder and logistics provider with 41 offices around the globe, working in a variety of sectors including construction and mining, energy, chemicals, food and many others.

Established in 1925, the company has a long history of moving freight around the world, whether by ocean, air, rail or inland transport. On the can making side, the company’s role is to move equipment, raw materials, spare parts and finished goods and to provide the documentation necessary for the smooth transportation into the country of destination.

A COMPANY YOU CAN TRUST

For can making logistics, Rojas believes UTC Overseas’ reputation has been cemented over a number of years due to the quality of service the team provides. In a relatively small industry like the can making business, trust is a crucial factor. This is something she believes UTC delivers on time after time.

“Our reputation in this niche market is our USP,” she explains. “In can making I would say the value added is our group, our people. We have an impressive résumé of customers, which include the main can makers, and a number of other key suppliers. Then there are the inks and sealant companies too.

“We employ a control tower approach here. For each project, there is typically an operations team assigned and Dean and I are always involved. We are the support when logistics become difficult at the country of destination, where it can often become complex. As the team navigates through the different difficulties involved in shipping, it is our responsibility to help them.

“Ninety per cent of the problems we encounter, our customers will never know about as we find the solution; we troubleshoot behind the scenes. With 30 years’ experience, we can address all the problems involved with shipping can making equipment and supplies.”

Temple agrees that it’s that knowledge built up over 30 years that has made UTC Overseas the go-to equipment transportation company within can making. In a very close knit industry, this is something that cannot be easily replicated.

“It can’t be overstated how all of the steps in the shipping process we are already familiar with,”



he notes. “We know who the players are, who the suppliers are, and what the equipment is.

“We’ve shipped over 200 can lines, and we understand the sequence of delivery, to understand that so the deliveries arrive in a certain sequence at their destinations. We track shipments door to door, provide weekly, or even daily reports of the whole process. Any delay on shipping can delay an entire line.

“You can’t say to a customer – we delivered 99 per cent of the equipment, what’s the problem? You don’t make cans or ends unless you have the whole equipment. That’s part of what makes us passionate about this industry. Relationships have been formed over the years – we really do care about our customers.”

LOGISTICS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Often in business, there is a certain element of nostalgia, particularly when it comes to the can ▷



making business. As is the way, the advent of instant forms of communication have made it easier to track progress, giving way to the IT experts and analysts, as opposed to the engineer of yesteryear. This has led some to hanker after years gone by, the supposed 'golden age' of can making. Although this is not necessarily something Temple totally subscribes to, he does concede that business has changed and UTC Overseas has had to evolve to stay competitive with companies where the logistics analyst rules and price dictates.

"There used to be a bit more flexibility with carriers willing to work with you," he says. "Now it's 'this is the schedule, this is where we go, this is when we go'.

"Business is still people wanting to do business with people. We are fortunate to have those relationships within the canning sector. However, am I nostalgic? Yes, I guess a little, because it's about

relationships. Now just looking at spreadsheets does not paint a complete picture of what it takes to get something from point A to point B.

"You used to have traffic managers. Now people don't know what this is! That could be a logistics guy now or freight analysts, or just plain analysts seeking cost savings with little regard to all that is involved in transportation. That's the big challenge for us, as companies keep consolidating to persuade them why to use UTC as opposed to the thousands of other forwarding companies."

"It's usually about the bottom line without looking at the complexities of a project," Rojas adds. "Fortunately though, the can making industry is still largely bucking the trend in business, where it comes down to the overall quality of offering, rather than just price.

"We are still fortunate to have a number of people within the industry that look to our

Case Study – Nichols Greenfield Project

An example of UTC Overseas' importance to the can making business was seen in 2017, when the company was tasked with handling a new aluminium beverage container manufacturing facility in Nichols, New York, US.

The company was tasked with handling the project from door-to-door, bringing in shipments of machinery, parts and supplies from China, Europe and the US into the facility.

To understand the scale of UTC's role within the process, for this project the company utilised an eight-axle trailer to move the heaviest pieces, two 62 metric tonne cupping presses, from Canton, Ohio to Nichols.

As the trailer was too large to enter the building, UTC contracted a local rigging com-

pany to transfer the load to a six-axle trailer. Due to the weight, the Department of Transport wouldn't issue a permit for the six-axle trailer to use public roads.

UTC therefore devised a solution; the eight axle trailer would deliver the cupping presses to the jobsite immediately outside of the building, and then the machines would be moved to the six-axle trailer.

Using a 300 metric tonne hydraulic crane, the presses were lifted off the eight-axle trailer and carefully placed onto the smaller trailer for final delivery. Over a period of three months, UTC moved 800 trailer combinations containing over 12,750 tonnes of equipment sourced from all over the world, on time and safely.



expertise as a value not as a procurement of a product, and whatever the lowest cost is, this may not necessarily be best for the customer.

“We are still lucky with that, but those days are changing. But now with the bigger players it’s about auctions online.”

THE FUTURE

Due to their experience and contacts in every facet of the can making industry, UTC Overseas is well placed to offer an assessment of the current health of the can making business.

The main growth will still be Southeast Asia according to Temple, but he makes a couple of interesting predictions. “I’ve been shocked to see how much equipment has gone into Southeast Asia, Vietnam and Cambodia in particular,” explains Temple. “It’s interesting how in the emerging markets, when the middle class increases, can plants are right behind them; the emergence of a middle class equals growth in can making markets.

The future emerging markets are still Southeast Asia and South America, but of course hopefully the holy grail is India one day. There is still potential in Africa.”

So too there are challenges for UTC Overseas, as Rojas explains: “We’ve been in this industry for a long time, so it’s about working out a legacy plan for us. Millennials don’t necessarily want to do this type of work, so that’s going to be a challenge

for us for sure.

“Finding qualified people that want to do this is difficult. We are passionate about this niche market and a lot of people are friends of ours in this industry, so we want to leave the company in safe hands when we retire, which isn’t quite just yet, I hasten to add.

“We have been exposing some new people within our organisation to this industry though, so we are confident they will aptly take on this responsibility. Bryan and Ray have and will continue to expertly lead this group – it’s time for the next generation.”

The next generation for UTC Overseas will certainly inherit a strong business model. Temple is confident in the claim that the company handles more canning packaging equipment than any other forwarder in the world.

“Transportation is only a small per cent of the cost of the line, but it’s still a critical component to the project timeline, because whoever the customer is, they have made the commitment to make a certain amount of cans by a certain timeline,” he says. “But on many projects, nobody has figured it out in advance how to get the machinery there.

“We formed as a niche business. For this reason, it’s not necessarily a big enough industry to attract loads of competition. We are at every can show in the world, and so our visible presence ensures we intend to be a strong part of this industry in the years to come. Cheers to 30 years!” 

