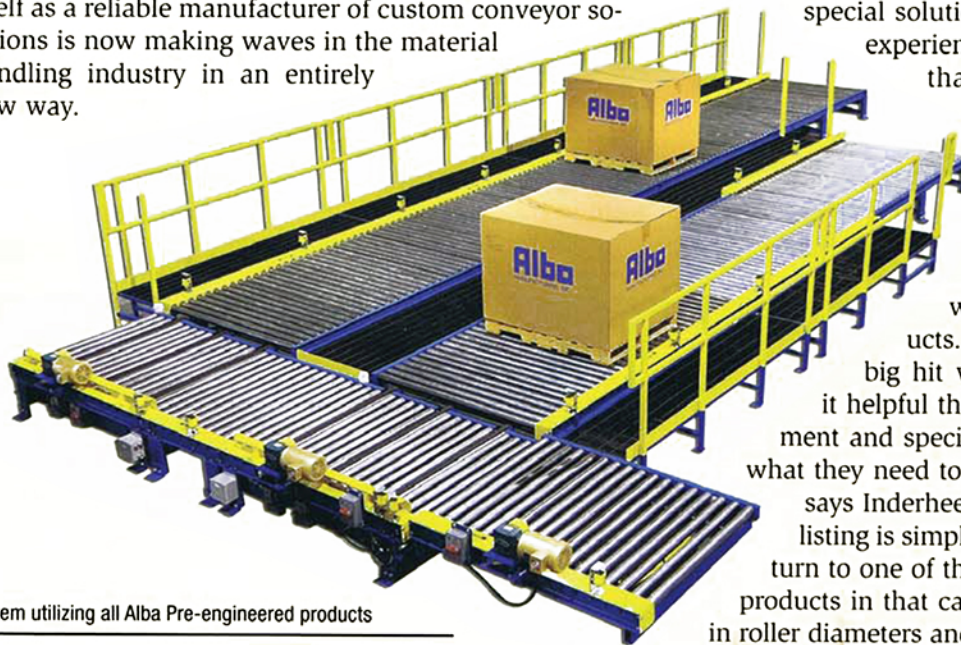


# Delivering Innovation To The Distributor's Doorstep

*Alba Manufacturing now offers pre-engineered products.*

**I**n 2008, we saw the industry heading toward a major decline in business, so we decided to be proactive and implement a new strategy for growth." The words of Alba Manufacturing President Tom Inderhees reflect the Fairfield, Ohio, company's foresight to pursue an aggressive business plan that has proven not only shrewd, but successful. A company that made a name for itself as a reliable manufacturer of custom conveyor solutions is now making waves in the material handling industry in an entirely new way.



System utilizing all Alba Pre-engineered products

## THE NEW ALBA

In the third quarter of 2008, Alba looked at a troubled economy and saw an opportunity to reinvent itself. To enhance its offerings, Alba decided to develop a line of pre-engineered solutions. The company studied its distributors' needs over the last five years and generated a list of products for which there was the greatest demand. Many distributors knew that Alba was the place to go for innovative custom solutions. With its pre-engineered line, Alba found a way to deliver its signature innovation in a standard package.

Once the decision was made to focus on pre-engineered solutions, Alba set about the process of preparing for its new venture, designing the products, standardizing drawings, ramping up inventory and adding staff. Now at full strength, Alba boasts an impressive product offering, including chain-driven live roller conveyors, right-angle

chain transfers, drag chain conveyor, pneumatic- and electric-rotation turntables with powered conveyor decks, pallet dispensers and pallet stackers. These heavy-duty products are perfectly suited for pallet handling applications. "Once the product is palletized, that's where we take over," says Inderhees. The list of applications does not end with moving pallets. "If your system requires a special solution, our vast range of products and experience means we deliver proven ideas that work. We've handled industries' most demanding applications and products."

Just how expansive is Alba's pre-engineered product offering? The company recently came out with a 232-page catalog, complete with spec sheets for all of its products. The new catalog is proving to be a big hit with distributors. "Salespeople find it helpful that they can look at all of the equipment and specifications and then pick and choose what they need to design a system for the customer," says Inderhees. Navigating the extensive product listing is simple as well. A salesperson can quickly turn to one of the catalog's ten tabs to see all of the products in that category, right down to the variances in roller diameters and roller wall thicknesses.

Alba's distributors are quickly realizing the benefits of the company's pre-engineered line. With standard drawings and ample inventory on hand, Alba is now able to release an order to the shop within a matter of hours. This significantly reduces order-to-delivery time, getting the product to the end-user quickly. "We can ship our gravity conveyor and chain-driven live roller in about a week. Drag chains, transfers and turntables leave the shop in three to four weeks, and other products average around six weeks," says Inderhees. Distributors are enjoying other benefits afforded by Alba's pre-engineered line. "We significantly reduced the cost of manufacturing by standardizing our processes, and we did not have to sacrifice quality to do it," points out Inderhees.

## ONE MILLION CYCLES

Like all of its products, those in Alba's pre-engineered line are proven to withstand years of wear. Every product



is manufactured with welded steel construction, a method which offers a major advantage over conveyors that use bolted construction, as Inderhees explains. "There are no bolts that can come loose and cause problems. Our conveyor frames can handle the regular abuse of a fork truck loading pallets, whether it's from the side or the end." Because Alba cares about reliability, the company uses only name-brand components, from motors to reducers. Every product in the catalog is covered by a two-year warranty. "We stand behind what we manufacture 100 percent. It's our responsibility to ensure that the conveyor does what it's intended to do, and we accept that responsibility."

But the promise of a two-year warranty was not enough for Inderhees and for Alba. The company wanted to prove the high-quality of its products in a measurable way—seven figures, to be exact. Alba put its chain transfer to the test by running it for one million cycles with load. As expected, the transfer held up to the company's exacting standards. "In today's environment, you have to follow up high-speed case and carton with reliability and durability. Today's palletizers and stretch wrappers handle 80 pallet loads an hour. Our products are designed around these demands."

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Since Alba was founded in 1973, distributors have come to know the company for its ability to provide unique, innovative solutions while delivering exceptional service. Now, equipped with a new focus on pre-engineered solutions, Alba is taking this role to the next level, turning customers into partners. "We are working with distributors to provide end-users with solutions that fit their needs and to do it at a competitive price," says Inderhees. To help make this happen, Alba will send its knowledgeable sales and engineering staff anywhere in the country.

Inderhees described a recent instance where a distributor of Alba products was vying for an order: "We flew in one of our national sales managers and an engineer to the end-user's facility to help win the bid. We observed the end-users' processes and operations and then worked with the distributor to find a solution to their conveyance problems." Alba's willingness to deliver personal service to a distributor or end-user's doorstep is rare, especially for a small company. As Inderhees explains, exceptional service is Alba's bread and butter.

As Alba's pre-engineered product line drives the company's growth, the company is more committed than



Alba Manufacturing Distributor Sales Managers (l-r) Kyle McMahan, Brad Bell, Dennis Bosse and Paul Schraer.

ever to maintaining the individualized service it is known for. Sales managers frequently visit distributor locations to put on product training seminars. In addition, Alba offers its distributors the benefit of protected territories, along with any sales leads generated by the company's marketing efforts.

## PREPARED FOR GROWTH

In the last two years, Alba has tripled its inventory levels to ensure that customer demands are met in a timely manner. "We never want to miss an opportunity because we do not have the inventory," says Inderhees. "We have a reputation of service and quality, and we're intent on maintaining that reputation." In the next year, Alba plans on expanding its staff by 30 percent, adding 15 machine operators, welders and assemblers to bolster the manufacturing staff at its 67,000 sq. ft. facility in Fairfield, Ohio. As the growing orders demand increased production capacity, Inderhees figures the company is comfortably positioned, with the ability to expand its current manufacturing facilities up to 150,000 sq. ft.

With the success of its pre-engineered line, expansion may come quicker than expected at Alba Manufacturing. In 2010, the company saw a 56 percent growth in booking and a 48 percent growth in shipments. While these numbers speak volumes, Alba's exceptional quality and service speaks for itself. "We have a high quality product and a competitive price. We hear it from distributors and end-users all the time: When the competition is up against us and our products, we're tough to beat."