

THE BUSINESS NEWS

Serving Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan & Winnebago counties

October 8, 2012

www.thebusinessnews.com

Vol. 10, No. 12 \$1.00

Dura-Fibre battled through recession



While most consumers don't realize it, Luke Benrud says Dura-Fibre's products are found in just about every household. The Business News photo by Kathi Bloy

Business has improved 'substantially' for maker of paperboard products

By Brian Neuberger

bneuberger@thebusinessnews.com

When it comes to identifying companies both locally and domestically that evoke top-of-mind awareness of the household variety, chances are Dura-Fibre is not on the short list.

Nevertheless, the probability that a majority of consumers have directly felt the impact of the Menasha-based company's service offerings and products is rather high.

Headquartered at 352 6th Street in Menasha, Dura-Fibre, according to director of operations Luke Benrud, is a "supplier of custom solid fiber paperboard products, providing solutions to the folding carton, furniture and industrial packaging markets. Dura-Fibre has also become the largest manufacturer of paperboard used throughout the furniture industry. Odds are some of the furniture in your house contains Dura-Fibre's board."

In operation for more than 75 years, Dura-Fibre, which has 60 employees, provides customized solutions to the numerous needs within the folding carton, furniture and industrial packaging industries.

"We are often told that we are a preferred supplier because we go beyond what is expected of us to service our customers. Generally speaking, our technical expertise is a huge contributor to providing customers with the high level of service they receive

when partnering with Dura-Fibre," said Benrud, a UW-Stout graduate who, prior to joining Dura-Fibre in August 2011, served as a project engineer for an industrial construction company in southern California. "Because of our experience, we can manage our customer's needs without complication. Because of our innovative capabilities, we can provide our customers the best solution available in our industry."

Such state-of-the art solutions are reflected via Dura-Fibre's laminating, die cutting, and design/engineering support.

It is a winning formula, Benrud points out, which produces many of the items one is likely to encounter on any given day.

"Some examples of our products are furniture backs that are installed on the back side of desks, bookshelves and entertainment centers, to name a few, on ready-to-assemble furniture," he said. "This typically has a surface mirroring wood grain identical to the wood used in building the piece of furniture."

Another example the company's product line is large folding cartons used in club store packaging where greater strength, durability and better printing surfaces are required or desired.

It also makes protective packaging used when shipping industrial products, as well as recyclable totes used for storage and/or transportation.

“
Our vision is to become a \$50 million manufacturer of innovative packaging materials, converted products and laminated solutions.

— Luke Benrud,
director of operations,
Dura-Fibre,
Menasha

”
Dura-Fibre, which has been active in the use of recycled paperboard for more than half a century, is well-positioned in the paperboard and packaging industry.

Originally founded in the early 1900s by a local paper manufacturer in Menasha, the company changed hands in the 1970s upon being acquired by Menasha Corp. and, ultimately, became a stand-alone company under the present Dura-Fibre moniker in 2004 when the business was purchased by Dunsirn Partners.

From the company's beginning to the present day, though, Benrud points out that the business has been able to mirror and adapt its service capabilities with a business climate

synonymous with growth and development.

"The products manufactured here have evolved drastically over the years," said Benrud, who notes that Dura-Fibre's customer base is rooted throughout North America. "Beginning, primarily, with the production of material handling products (such as slip sheets) to currently producing high quality folding-carton substrates that compete with corrugated products."

Despite its recent successes, however, Benrud said that Dura-Fibre, similar to many of its manufacturing brethren, felt firsthand the negative impact wrought by the economic downturn; although the road to recovery has been swift.

"Business has improved substantially since the 2009 recession," Benrud said. "Essentially, we managed to get through this difficult period with effective cost management and exploring new markets."

Benrud points out that the goals for the continued expansion of Dura-Fibre in the near and long-term future, while lofty, are attainable if the present recipe for success is adhered to.

"Our vision is to become a \$50 million manufacturer of innovative packaging materials, converted products and laminated solutions," he said. "Through specific, measurable actions, we will collectively work as a team to accomplish the tasks we identified as necessary to achieve this vision."