

Out of room

Hartland distributor plans custom design for larger plant

BY ERIC DECKER, of SBT

Managed Packaging Systems Inc., a Hartland-based distributor and vendor of automated packaging equipment, has been out of room at its current 2,900-square-foot facility for a year.

However, its space problems will be resolved soon. William Steuer and Scott Fischer, co-owners of the business, recently closed on their \$1.3 million purchase of an 18,500-square-foot building, located about two blocks from their current leased space. They plan to move the company there this fall.

The company will move from its current site at 1005 Richards Road to the new building at 955 Walnut Ridge.

Both co-owners say they frequently have difficulty showing customers the products they sell, because there isn't enough space for an adequate showroom.

"It's been building over the last year or so," Fischer said. "We're constantly scrambling to keep it clean or to set it up so a client can view a product. One of the focuses of the new place will be that our lines will be set up and in place."

Managed Packaging Systems will occupy about 12,500 square feet of space in the building. The remaining 6,000 square feet of space is occupied by two tenants, who already lease space there.

Steuer and Fischer are planning about \$300,000 in improvements to the building before they move in this fall.

One of the prominent features of the building, both Steuer and Fischer said, will be a new showroom.



ON THE MOVE William Steuer and Scott Fischer, managing partners and co-owners of Managed Packaging Systems Inc., plan to move their business into this building in Hartland this fall.

"Image is huge for us."

— William Steuer,
Managed Packaging Systems Inc.

"Image is huge for us," Steuer said. "We sell high-end lines, and they need to look the part. It's been difficult here. We're out of space. We've got equipment stacked on equipment. If we left the door open, machinery would pour right out."

The new building will feature glass doors leading into the showroom from the reception and office areas, making the showroom a focal point, Fischer said.

"This is a huge step for us," he said. "As you come in, the center point will be the equipment center."

The new showroom will also allow clients to try out different pieces of equipment before they purchase them, Fischer said. In addition, Managed Packaging Systems will hold educational seminars for customers' employees.

"Customers are going to be able to bring in people and run their product," Fischer said. "We can do training seminars in there and not have to scramble around."

Managed Packaging Systems carries product lines from several different manufacturers. Its largest lines are from Hartland-based Doerner Manufacturing Corp., and Autobag, a division of Streetsboro, Ohio-

based Automated Packaging Systems Inc. Doerner makes conveyors and related products for manufacturing, food and pharmaceutical markets. Autobag makes automated packaging systems that can print labels on plastic bags, put products in those bags and seal the bags in one assembly line.

Another important part of the new building will be a 7,500-square-foot warehouse area in the rear of the building, Fischer said. It will enable the company to consolidate all of its equipment in one location. It currently leases space at two warehouses nearby.

Loading docks will be added at the back of the warehouse. Because the building has ceilings taller than 25 feet, a second floor will be added in the front, where executive and some sales offices will likely be placed.

Fischer and Steuer aren't moving their company just because they are out of space for their products. They're out of room for their people too.

Since starting the company, Steuer and Fischer have taken it from about \$1 million

in revenue in 2001 to \$5.8 million in 2004. They are expecting about \$6.8 million in revenue in 2005. The company generated \$3.2 million in revenue through the end of June.

"It's a combination of the things we've got going," Steuer said. "We're starting to hit our stride. We've got a few extra sales guys on the road."

The company hired two new sales employees at the end of June, bringing its sales staff up to five, including Steuer and Fischer. The company is planning to hire two more employees before the end of the year.

Before starting Managed Packaging Systems, Fischer and Steuer worked together for about 20 years at Rikert Manufacturing, also based in Hartland.

Rikert Manufacturing was purchased by Wisconsin Film and Bag in the late 1990s, and both stayed on for a few years before leaving to form Managed Packaging Systems.

"We left our old employer with their blessing and an agreement to manage some of their business," Fischer said. "I feel like I've come full circle. When I started at Rikert, it was a distributor."

Steuer said the company is poised to grow as automation continues to become crucial in the manufacturing, food and pharmaceutical markets.

"Automation is a big part of what we do for people," he said. "And we haven't hit our stride yet. I think the next couple of years will be special for us. We've got some big things in the works."

Managed Packaging Systems Inc.

ADDRESS: 1005 Richards Road, Hartland. Will be moving to 955 Walnut Ridge, Hartland this fall.

INDUSTRY: Distributor and vendor of automated packaging systems

EMPLOYEES: 8

2005 PROJECTED ANNUAL REVENUES: \$6.8 million, a 26 percent increase

WEB SITE: www.managedpackaging.com