

▶ COLLABORATION & EDUCATION — KEY TO EVOLVING CHALLENGES

ROSS BEVACQUA, REGIONAL SALES MANAGER, WEST, PFERD INC.

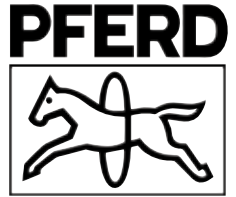
As the aging workforce in manufacturing is retiring, so is the know-how to continue manufacturing complex components. The evolution of manufacturing continues to bring challenges to the world in which distributors/vendors conduct business; distributors must be prepared to meet these challenges head-on.

A prime example is the increase in automated deburring processes. In the past, OEMs/customers used to deburr machined components by hand. Now, CNC and automation technology is allowing OEMs to streamline production by using innovative abrasive products such as PFERD's M-BRAD nylon abrasive-filament brushes. Industrial distributors must have the technical expertise to consult in these changing applications, and vendors must strengthen existing relationships to allow more open collaboration to achieve ROI for all.

Distributors and vendors need to offer solutions, becoming a trusted advisor to each customer. The community of industrial distributors is on the front lines of the changing needs of the customer base and must develop

the technical aptitude and confidence level sufficient to support manufacturers. Here is where strong technical suppliers help the industrial distributor landscape by providing product education and applications solutions. PFERD places a strong focus on education and distributor support. With a structured training program offered through its PFERDACADEMY in Milwaukee, training classes are offered year-round and consist of classroom and focused hands-on training. Attendees learn about the products themselves and also how to sell solutions for key applications, while demonstrating overall value rather than a focus on price.

With a dedicated team of applications specialists, sales representatives, and product engineers, PFERD partners with industrial sales representatives to bring the technical know-how and specialized solutions often required by today's manufacturers. Strong collaboration and knowledge sharing between vendors and distributors is vital to addressing the growing skills gap and loss of industry expertise due to retirement this industry faces.



BEVACQUA

▶ GET WORK DONE FASTER WITH ULTRA-THIN CUTTING WHEELS

TONY HUFFORD, CATEGORY MANAGER - METAL FABRICATION, WEILER ABRASIVES GROUP

There are many ways for manufacturers to reduce costs and gain efficiencies — including new processes or automation — but at the core is using the right product for the job. For manual metal cutting, ultra-thin cutting wheels are among the newest products to improve productivity and cost savings.

Thinner gauge steel, sheet metal and small-diameter tubing can be challenging to cut. Challenges include excessive heat buildup (discoloration), controlling the cut (especially over long runs) and burr creation, which requires a secondary operation to remove. Using an ultra-thin cutting wheel, typically marketed as 1MM, can help.

Ultra-thin wheels provide an extremely fast, nearly burr-free cut. This reduces friction so the cut is cooler with significantly less heat discoloration. On smaller pipe or thinner materials, an ultra-thin wheel can cut up to 30 percent faster than standard 0.045-inch wheels. They also provide more control and are smoother on longer cuts.

Using a thinner wheel can also help reduce burr size, which eliminates the need for a secondary deburring operation — saving time and money.

Ultra-thin cutting wheels are typically available in the same grain types and configurations — including Type 1 and Type 27 styles with the same

cutting grains — as 0.045-inch cutting wheels. Type 1 wheels are flat and typically used for straight-on cutting, while Type 27 wheels have a depressed center and can be used when there is interference and/or offset is desired.

While ultra-thin cutting wheels are among the newest trends on the market, not all these wheels deliver equal performance. Traditionally, the thinner the wheel the shorter the life. Not any more. Look for wheels created with Solid CORE technology, which makes the wheel denser without increasing thickness — so product life isn't sacrificed for an increased cut rate.



HUFFORD

3D ABRASIVE MATERIALS

ADAM STALEY, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, CIBO ABRASIVES USA

Time stands still for no one, and that's certainly been the story within the abrasives industry for the past several decades. One of the most interesting developments has been the arrival of 3D abrasive materials; this development has the market firmly within its grasp and didn't come a moment too soon. After all, achieving the perfect finish using traditional abrasive materials has been a difficult feat for a long time. Operators used to be given time to gradually grow into true abrasives specialists so that, in time, they would have enough expertise to achieve the desired result. That time is no longer available. Flexibility is now the supreme good. Employees are more often utilized for multiple jobs, change jobs faster, or decide to re-orient within the same company. As a consequence, true grinding skills are no longer sufficiently available.

Increasingly, less-practiced users mean that the need for more forgiving abrasive materials is high, taking into account the fact that the demand for a perfect finish is

only growing in some industries. Then add in the increasing wage costs and the need to be able to sand and grind safer, more comfortably and faster. It's only logical that the world of abrasives is focusing on 3D abrasive materials, such as the semi-flexible unitized, which achieves better results in stainless steel finishes and high-quality titanium and cobalt alloys with less risk for mistakes and with more comfort. Due to improved steps and evolutions in the welding process, less material must be ground off and there is less need for heavier machining. The majority of actions performed on stainless steel can now be effortlessly done using unitized abrasive material.

3D abrasive material in general and unitized in particular is therefore the present and the future of abrasives. Because one thing is for certain: as far as unitized material and its possibilities are concerned, there's no stopping!



STALEY

THE BEST PRODUCT FOR THE APPLICATION

FRANK PRENDA, VICE PRESIDENT SALES & MARKETING, GEMTEX ABRASIVES

There are many opportunities for sales personnel to increase sales while achieving the fulfillment of helping customers maximize their objective goals. Contrary to popular belief, many end users are not experts at determining the best products/tools to use for their specific applications.

The interesting thing about abrasives is that although a particular abrasive will work in a given application, it may not be the best product for the job at hand. A classic example is a customer using an aluminum oxide resin fibre disc to grind welds on stainless steel. The aluminum oxide will work, but the performance will be dramatically enhanced by using a zirconia or ceramic disc that is better suited and formulated for stainless steel applications. The same can be said about using coated abrasive sanding discs to remove paint, rust

or scale. They will do the job, but in the process of removing the desired surface coating, they will also remove the parent material which lies under the surface coating. In that case, stripping discs such as Strip Away would be a better alternative because that category of non-woven abrasives is designed to remove the surface coating without affecting the parent metal.

Another way for sales personnel to provide a value service to end users is to inform them of the best methods to use in the evaluation process of abrasives. It is very common for an end user to test sanding discs by having an employee grind for 30 seconds with each competitive disc and then make a decision based on which one he likes. The decision to choose the best abrasive for the application should be made using various criteria



such as product price, stock removal rate and labor rate. The cost per unit of an abrasive product alone is not the true indicator of the abrasive cost to the end user. A grinding ratio, or the volume of material removed per unit volume of disc wear, is the most conclusive testing procedure to determine overall cost because it takes into account stock removal while factoring in the cost of the product and labor rate.

Bringing this type of awareness to end users will go a long way toward building relationships that last a lifetime!



PRENDA

▶ WHY CUSTOMER NEEDS SHOULD ALWAYS PUSH PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

SCOTTIE MAHL, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND PRODUCT MANAGEMENT, OSBORN

Customer needs should always push product development. Too often, product managers and engineers become insulated inside a company's structure and wind up innovating just for the sake of innovation. Without a real customer need pushing design, products are doomed to be unsuccessful. That's why it is critical to make sure you have a system where customer needs can be quickly brought into the design process.

That same principle can help a distributor develop relationships with customers and vendors. Be responsive. Train your people to listen and adapt, rather than just filling out an order. Make sure an issue can be routed to and addressed by the person most able to help fix it. Despite advances in technology, the availability of products from any corner of the world, and our ever-connected world, the oldest advice is still true – listen more than you talk.

Small, local and responsive are the surest ways to succeed in both product development and customer service. Even a large company can be these things. The trick is to have the people and systems in place for quick turnaround on customer issues and opportunities. Have the training in place that will allow them to either answer a question or know whom to contact to get the answer. Reward innovation and problem resolution. Own up to mistakes and fix a problem; a small sacrifice now may develop a loyal customer.

Increasingly, customers have options outside the traditional distributor model. The key to remaining relevant to your customers is to become a resource for them. Be the solution they look for and a key to their success.



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