Polymerics focuses on change, growth

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CUYAHOGA FALLS, Ohio—Change is just more than idle talk these days at Polymerics Inc.

Visitors not only can see proof of it inside the building of the custom rubber mixer, from the new, energy-efficient lighting to renovated offices, to the firm’s new F80 mixer, as it works on its color line and increases cooling capabilities on its black line.

And perhaps, most notably, they can see it in the body language and hear it in the voices of the Polymerics management staff. “It’s an exciting time for us,” said Technical Sales Manager Santino DeSimone. “It’s a great place to work.”

“You enjoy walking into these doors each day,” said Troy Smith, a 30-year employee and plant manager of the 56,000-sq.-ft. Cuyahoga Falls facility. “It’s a great place to work.”

“Essentially, we’re looking at some things that have good cooling, has higher throughput and will improve the appearance of the product that’s going out,” he said. “We want something that’s a little more uniform.”

The big difference is morale,” said William Sanderson, a 24-year company veteran who is environmental, health and safety manager. “Morale is so much better, ever since Tim came back full time, working day to day.”

“Tim” is CEO Tim Samples, whose family founded the firm in 1972. Samples worked at the plant from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. He returned for his latest stint in 2011, assuming day-to-day operations of both Polymerics’ facilities—the headquarters in Cuyahoga Falls and the other in Kent, Ohio, where chemical blending is conducted—in 2012. The facilities have a combined work force of around 80.

The firm also has another facility in China, two hours south of Shanghai.

Polymerics is in the process of investing $1.5 million in upgrades at the firm’s headquarters, providing custom compounds using a wide variety of elastomers for sectors such as automotive, medical, hose, belts, automotive, military and medical, safety, seals and gaskets, rubber rollers and coated fabrics.

The staff at Polymerics Inc. includes (sitting) CEO Tim Samples, back (from left) Troy Smith, Santino DeSimone, Nicki Hershberger, Kimberly Marquis, William Sanderson and Lora McCambridge.

Those aren’t the only changes Polymerics plans to initiate.

New facility in future plans

The company plans to move into another facility in about four years. Samples already has been scouting potential sites and doing his due diligence. The plan is to stay in northeast Ohio.

“We’re kind of landlocked here,” Samples said. “We have to get a building so that we can expand.”

Samples said Polymerics wants to maintain 10 percent growth each year over the next five years.

“We’re hoping to get a form-filling machine for the Kent facility that will reduce their labor cost, and we’re looking at improving our throughput here with the next mixers that we’re getting,” said Kimberly Marquis, operations manager at the 36,000-sq.-ft. Kent facility. “If we get the pelletization equipment that we want, it will open other markets and help us maintain that growth.”

The push to enhance the Polymerics name also includes more involvement in rubber-related activities, a drastic change from past practices.

Polymerics will co-host the Intermediate to Advanced Compounding and Testing of Rubber training classes, along with Akron Rubber Development Laboratory Inc. and the Rubber Division. Classes will be offered April 8-10 at the Rubber Division facility in Akron.

Those are all part of Polymerics’ transformation.

“Tim is trying to reinvent the way that we do things, the way that we perceive things,” said Nicki Hershberger, a technical consultant with the firm. “It’s a breath of fresh air for the company, to see life again.”