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All in the Details

by Jeff Steele

If there is one quality that distinguishes Marc Carter, it's his attention to detail. Marc believes a good work ethic drives an attitude of "get it done, without fail, accurately and on time." That philosophy earns the purchasing veteran the nod this month as featured member in the prestigious APS Member Profile Series.

Springfield, Tennessee-based UNARCO Material Handling, where Marc serves as purchasing manager, is a leader in the material handling industry, producing roll formed and structural pallet rack systems and maintaining manufacturing locations in Ohio, Texas and at the Tennessee corporate offices.

The company produces an entire line of warehouse storage solutions including carton flow, push back and drive-in/drive-through systems incorporated into pallet rack modules, Marc says.

A domestic pallet rack manufacturer for more than 50 years, the company offers extensive engineering and custom design services to its customers. It has recorded sales of approximately \$140 million annually in recent years.

Marc reports directly to the vice president of purchasing and often assists other company buyers. Purchasing is partially centralized at the Tennessee corporate office, but some plant-specific buying takes place at the other locations.

The major purchase categories for UNARCO include steel slit coil, anchor bolts and hardware, steel components for weldment, wire mesh decks, stair systems, floor systems, safety gates and guard railing products, Marc reports.

UNARCO supplies many types of complimentary products with its pallet rack modules and storage racks purchased from outside suppliers. This approach offers customers a more turnkey rack system, enabling them to avoid having to engineer and source products that complement their rack structures.

Part of Marc's responsibility is sourcing all outside purchased products that go on or with the completed rack projects. "Many aspects come into play regarding these outside purchases," he reports. "[They include] dimensional capability, design criteria to local and industrial code compliance, robustness with regard to construction quality and supplier delivery availability."

For Marc, a source of considerable pride is qualifying a supplier before sourcing from that supplier.

"A supplier must be competent in aspects such as quality, the meeting of delivery expectation, financial health and

engineering capability," he says. "If a supplier fails in any of these areas, it will most likely affect my company's customer in some way. And that cannot happen."

Nothing gives Marc greater satisfaction than negotiating with suppliers with a goal of enhancing his company's bottom line. The bottom line betterment is made possible by reducing costs below what was originally quoted during the estimating phase of his company's projects.

"Such savings go directly to the bottom line, due to the fact the company usually does not have to handle the outside or directly shipped products," Marc says. "These purchases can assist greatly with the company's profitability."

Marc understands his vendors must be profitable to remain financially healthy, but strives to leave, as he puts it, "no meat on the bone" when negotiating with valid suppliers. One method he often uses is to couple requirements for different projects into a single negotiation to bring about more aggressive supplier costing, he says. Another is the use of extended payment terms.

Another point of pride for Marc is continually working with suppliers to assure on-schedule delivery.

He has to assure purchases are delivered during the phase of the installation in which they will be installed or erected. "If delivered too early, these products can take up valuable space, and could be damaged at the project site before being needed for installation," he says. "Likewise, if delivery is late, installers will be waiting for my products due to required sequencing of installation."

Marc relies on cyberspace to research suppliers and products. However, he has only a few vendors that handle quotes and orders online. "The websites of many of my suppliers offer documentation on company products, which proves helpful when researching supplier capabilities," he says. "But due to special engineering and changing dimensional aspects of the type of products being ordered, many parts are custom fabricated by qualified fabricators and manufacturers."

Raised in Gallatin, Tenn., Marc graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1987, with a major in business administration and a minor in economics.

Marc earned CPP certification several years ago. The certification, he says, is "a form of continuing education, and confirms to customers and suppliers that UNARCO Material Handling puts strong emphasis on purchasing professionalism, integrity and competence." ♦