Anne Savard,
Warehouse Director,
Chassis Division
Dorman Products, Inc.

THE SUMS OF ALL PARTS

A heavy-duty automatic tray-forming solution helping busy automotive parts distributor speed up its critical packing table operations

BY GEORGE GUIDONI, EDITOR
PHOTOS BY PIERRE LONGTIN

Founded exactly 40 years ago, Colmar, Pa.-headquartered **Dorman Products Inc.** has done many things right to virtually become a household name in the global automotive industry's key aftermarkets.

Generating annual revenues of over US$900 million, the company supplies thousands of different automotive replacement parts, automotive hardware, and brake products to the automotive aftermarkets and mass merchandise markets across North America, Europe, Australia and the Middle East.

Boasting a diverse product portfolio ranging from intake and exhaust manifolds to complex electronics, wheel bolts and door handles, the company's strong market presence and prominence have been built both through strong organic growth and an aggressive acquisition strategy that last year saw Dorman purchase the assets of Boisbriand, Que.-based auto parts supplier **MAS Industries**.

While Doorman's integration of the new assets into its existing corporate structure is still in its early stages, there is little doubt that this acquisition has tremendous upside potential for Dorman's future growth prospects.

Founded in 1997 by Mark Stermer, MAS Industries decided from the outset to focus almost exclusively on car chassis (frame) parts and control arms linking chassis to suspension hubs that carry the vehicle's wheels.

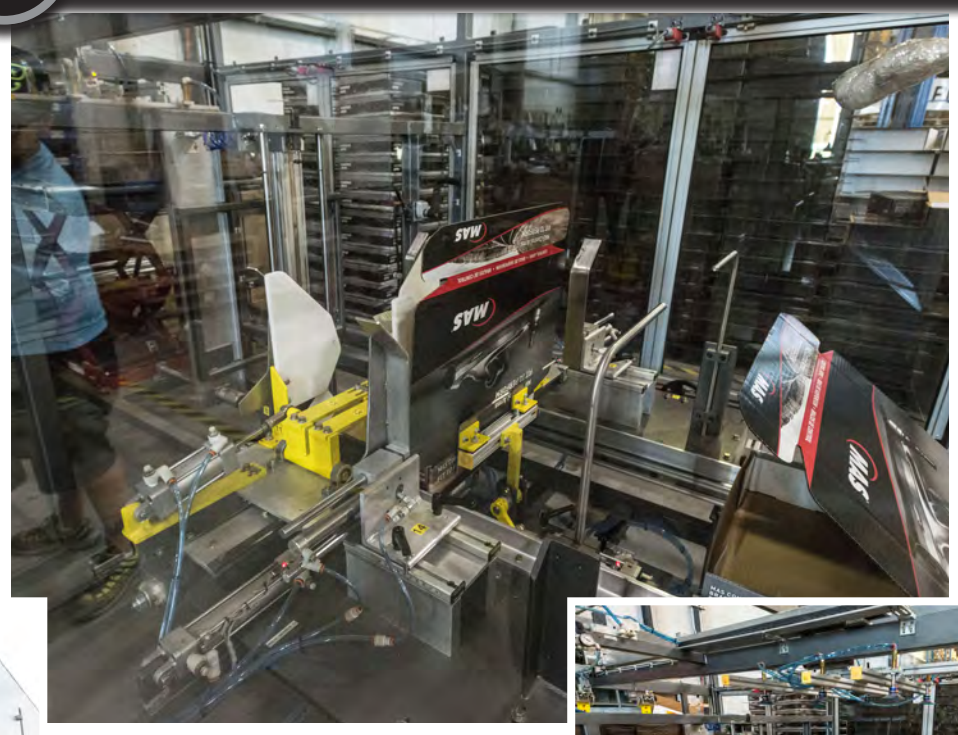
With unwavering focus on its core strengths, high product quality and superior customer service, MAS Industries quickly rose through industry ranks, as evidenced by its successful entries into the U.S. markets in 2003 and into Mexico in 2006.

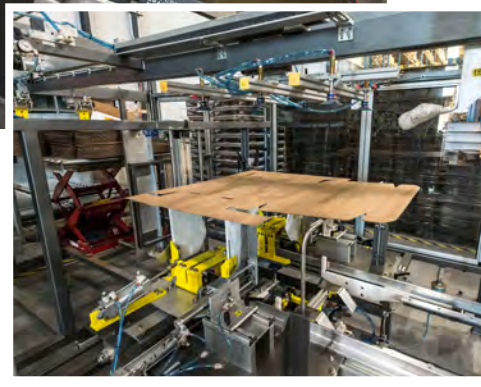
As a technology-savvy company that acquired its own proprietary cataloguing software to create one of the industry's most accurate and complete product databases, the company's status as a *bona fide* Tier One automotive OEM (original equipment manufacturer) was solidified in 2011 with the implementation of the *ERP (Enterprises Resource Planning)*, *WMS (Warehouse Management System)* and *CRM (Customer Relationship Management)* systems as required by the world's leading car companies.

According to Dorman's warehouse director Anne Savard, the corrugated boxes manufactured by Packaging Technologies, Inc. have earned the MAS brand industry-wide reputation as the best-looking cartons in the business, which she says is essential to maintaining the brand's leading position in the suspension parts segment of the industry.

This rise to the industry's big leagues was emphatically with the opening of a brand new *LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)*-certified distribu-

Located in close proximity to Montreal and major highways, Dorman's LEED-certified distribution center in Boisbriand stocks thousands of high-quality chassis and suspension parts at all times, operating a two-shift schedule to pick orders for its many customers across North America.





Manufactured by the Eagle Packaging Machine division of the Paxiom Group, the automatic PopLok machine installed at the Boisbriand plant has significantly reduced the time spent on assembling corrugated boxes manually.

tion facility stocking thousands of high-quality chassis parts and control arms.

With JIT (Just-in-Time) delivery nowadays being a standard practice across the whole automotive value chain, "This is a strategically advantageous location due to its proximity to various major highways and the whole greater Montreal area," says Anne Savard, warehouse director for the Chassis Division of Dorman Products, Inc.

"This building, which has earned LEED Silver accreditation as a validation of our commitment to sustainability, was significantly expanded in 2015 to add capacity in order to meet market demand for premium aftermarket chassis parts."

As Savard explains, "There has been a notable shift lately in chassis technology, and we are at the forefront of the design and engineering innovations.

"It has been a major challenge has been to educate consumers that as cars become more modern, so should their steering and suspension replacement parts," Savard states, citing the company's founding philosophy of 'Perfection in Fit, Form and Function.'

"Modern passenger vehicles are going much longer between oil changes than they used to," she explains, which has created the need for a premium aftermarket chassis parts that do not need extensive maintenance and are proven to last."

To fill this market need, the Dorman warehouse stocks an extensive selection of ***Dorman Premium XL***, ***Dorman Premium RD*** and ***MAS*** brand aftermarket chassis parts, which are distributed from our facility to either retail stores or automotive warehouse distributors.

"Our new Premium XL product line has proven to be a real game-changer and disrupter in our industry," says Savard, siting the facility proud track record of discovering "new markets, new technologies and new ways to meet industry needs.

"We have given the aftermarket steering and suspension industry a true alternative to the OE (original equipment) parts with the same modern chassis technology and premium quality," she states, "and the market response has been great!"

QUALITY FIRST

According to Dorman Products, "Few things in the automotive aftermarket business can hurt the bottom line as much as vehicles coming back due to low-quality parts.

"In addition to the negative effect on reputation when you have to repeat a repair, there is the loss of any profitability from the initial service.

"For us product development begins with completely understanding the professional technician's needs, which is why we start with the latest OE parts designs, apply the latest OE technology, and build from there.

"This ensures that we always deliver the superior performance and unsurpassed quality our customers have come to expect."

As Savard point out, "The quality of a part can't always be judged by its appearance.

"There are plenty of generic parts out there that may look the same, but how

The fully-automatic PopLok tray-forming solution is a turnkey workcell currently used to make 12 packaging-ready corrugated retail boxes per minute for the facility's picting tables handling control arm products.

Built with a heavy-duty welded steel frame, the rugged PopLok tray-forming machine is controlled via an Omron PLC (programmable logic controller) and features an operator-friendly HMI (human-machine interface) for easy navigation.

A finished mixed load of product is being secured to the shipping pallet by an automatic turntable stretchwrapping machine to ensure optimal product protection and load stability during transport.

they're built and what they're built from is what matters most.

"The internal components, the quality of the materials, how well it's designed, who stands behind it … these are the things you can't always see, but our customers know that they will always benefit from our experience and expertise."

With most of these parts supplied on continuous basis from manufacturing location across Asia and the U.S., the Boisbriand plant operates a busy two-shift schedule to process its orders, with fall and spring months being the busiest times of the year for the plant's staff.

"We are still pretty much a very manual operation," Savard explains.

"So rather than funning traditional packaging lines, we have 30 packing tables, where the staff are manually packing the parts in the boxes and preparing mixed orders for our clients."

According to Savard, "High-quality packaging has been a key differentiator for us.

"We have long been recognized as having the best boxes in the industry," she says, "and that has been a key selling point for us, especially for our Premium products.

"We fully believe that the quality of our packaging must reflect the superior quality of the products we offer," says Savard, citing "flexibility and adaptability" as two of the key strengths that have enabled the Boisbriand to achieve the level of success that it has, despite the significant manual labor component in its warehousing operations.

The Boisbriand plant makes extensive use of the TUFflex brand of packing tape from Veritiv Corporation throughout its packaging operations.

"As a small facility, we are constantly adapting our WOW (work on weekends) scheduling and the working environment to meet customer demands," says Savard, citing a recent installation of a new, fully-automatic tray-forming machine to help the warehouse workers improve their throughput—namely by not having to assemble the packing boxes and trays themselves.

Manufactured by the Miami, Fla.-based **Eagle Packaging Machinery LLC** part of the **Paxiom Group**, the fully-automatic ***PopLok*** tray-forming system has been a tremendous time and labor saver for the facility, according to Savard.

"Before the installation of this boxmaking equipment, all the boxes were assembled manually by the packers themselves, or by a designated person," Savard recalls.

"That process involved repetitive movements, and it also slowed down the operating speed at the packing tables.

"Adding this equipment enabled us to significantly reduce the time required to prepare orders and the repetitive movements by the packers."

BUILT TO LAST

Designed specifically to suit rugged packing application involving heavier items like auto parts, hardware merchandise, electronics and other durable consumer goods, the *PopLok* system is a highly flexible customizable automatic tray forming solution for reliable, high-speed erecting of self-locking die-cut corrugated and paperboard trays—with or without a lid.

Capable of forming multi-tuck trays, the ruggedly built machine—assembled on a heavy-duty welded steel frame—operates by gently pulling tray blanks, one at a time, from the hopper to a forming section, where high-precision plows then erect the side and end panels of the tray.

At the same time, the minor flaps are folded and the tray passes through a set of sidebars that fold and lock the rollover flaps into place.

Using no glue or tape, the *PopLok* handles a large variety of tray blank sizes and configurations to produce impressive finished product for shipping and/or display.

Says Savard: "Our new PopLok equipment is making up to 12 boxes a minute, and the average changeover time is approximately only 15 minutes.

"We estimate that we have saved the times spent on making boxes by about 60 per cent for our control arm products," Savard relates. "When you consider that we sell about 280,000 of those particular parts per year, those time-savings have a significant positive impact on our productivity and efficiency."

Adds Savard: "We are very satisfied with the machine's performance and the whole installation and startup experience with the Eagle Machinery representatives.

"They were a real pleasure to work with," she concludes, "and they were very professional in providing all the on-site training and other technical support that we needed to make this machine a real value-added part of our business.

"For a company that puts a big premium on quality, service, coverage and reliability like we do, this project was a great match."

SUPPLIERS

Eagle Packaging Machinery LLC