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OUTLOOK



Pamela McMaster,
Founder & CEO



Aaron Swanson,
President

PRO-TECH DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING INC.

A FULL-SERVICE FDA AND ISO REGISTERED CONTRACT MANUFACTURER

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By Alex D'Souza

When Pamela McMaster started her career selling packaging supplies to medical device companies, she identified a peculiar market-need. Her customers were growing sophisticated and needed more customized packaging solutions, but sadly, the market at that time didn't appear to accommodate their needs. "I felt like I could provide better solutions on my own rather than selling packaging supplies," recalls Pamela. Eventually, in 1980, Pamela started PRO-TECH Design and Manufacturing Inc. from her family room, and the business grew to a point where her husband

Dave joined, and they moved out of the family room into a tiny one-room office. From there, PRO-TECH's growth has been substantial—evolving from a distributor to a manufacturer and moving into increasingly larger spaces. However, in 1990, their resolution was tested again when an electrical fire completely destroyed their building. However, PRO-TECH was not ready to surrender. They set up tents in the parking lot to keep operations going and called customers to let them know that their orders would be



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delayed but delivered. “It is a testament to the relationship we had with them and their trust in us; they stayed and worked with us,” says Pamela. “It was a terrible time, but it also showed us that we, as a team could pull together in a time of crisis and emerge even stronger.” It has been more than three decades since, and PRO-TECH has never looked back. The company continues to expand its capabilities as a full-service FDA and ISO Registered contract manufacturer and packager.

Today, PRO-TECH has over 130 customers, some of whom are the world’s largest medical device companies. As Pamela steers the company toward its fourth decade of operations, she has been helped by her sons Aaron Swanson and Jeff Swanson (the president and vice president of sales, respectively), who dramatically expanded the company’s sterile packaging operations and capabilities.

A Customer-First Approach in Medical Device Packaging

The medical device packaging industry has undergone a drastic makeover regarding the technologies and processes

in use. However, there’s been one constant in this ever-changing landscape—the exceptional services offered by PRO-TECH. It reflects the primary business principles of Pamela—providing unmatched service, high-quality products, undivided attention to detail, and fair pricing. PRO-TECH has made considerable strides in the industry as a contract manufacturer that offers the flexibility, creativity, and motivation to their clientele. “We take pride in building strong customer relationships and being flexible enough to align our services according to their needs,” remarks Pamela. “In fact, our very first customer is still a customer 40 years later.”

Drawing on her rich experience, Pamela mentions that one of the major bottlenecks that customers, mainly mid-size companies, come across is the lack of product development experience. Despite having a strong background in engineering, many mid-size companies are often puzzled due to their limited knowledge in areas of packaging and sterilization. So how does PRO-TECH mitigate this problem? The answer lies in the roadmap that PRO-TECH prepares for the customers—giving them an overview

of the steps they need to follow to accomplish their milestones. This approach enables PRO-TECH to “speak the same language” as its customers, strengthen the bond with them, and eventually ensure smooth operations across packaging and supply. “One of the things that is so interesting about the medical device business, is that it is driven by innovation. Engineers are continually developing new life-saving devices to treat patients. This keeps us inspired on the packaging side of the business, and we love the challenge of innovating along with our customers,” says Aaron.

Five Pillars of Success

To help customers in every step of their medical device packaging, PRO-TECH assigns a dedicated team—a sales engineer in charge of the project, a manufacturing engineer who monitors the manufacturing processes, customer service personnel to handle the day-to-day activities, and lastly, a validation engineer to supervise the performance levels. The company also houses on-site package testing laboratories that prepare protocol development reports in a stipulated period of time. Besides, PRO-TECH also offers pre-validated medical packaging, especially for growing start-ups—stocked pouches, stocked trays, and others—that help reduce customer costs and time for launching the product into the market.

Predominantly, PRO-TECH is governed by the five core operating principles—customer first, relationships, experience, flexibility, and commitment to quality. “We don’t offer cookie-cutter solutions. As an organization, this has helped us build the muscle of flexibility, and we are very comfortable adapting to changing conditions,” mentions Aaron. From being a consultant and supplier for emerging companies, to walking them through the regulatory processes, and putting their operational pieces

together, PRO-TECH wears many hats to meet and exceed its customers’ requirements. “We’ve had new customers come to us specifically because they appreciate our personalized approach as well as our packaging expertise,” says Pamela.


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Delivering Unique Package-centric Approach

PRO-TECH continually strives to incorporate the latest technologies and robust quality management systems that are flexible, optimum, and at par with the changing market scenarios. The company’s unique capability

to adapt quickly to unprecedented challenges can be seen in how they rerouted around the COVID-19 hurdles by pushing its on-site meetings and workflows to the virtual front. PRO-TECH is even offering virtual training through specialized systems that allow them to bring clients to cleanrooms, witness every single process—starting from the assembly of parts to web-based audits—of medical device manufacturing by maintaining a fair amount of transparency. “Also, when the COVID pandemic first hit and there was a shortage of masks, we worked with our medical sewing team to quickly pivot and start sewing masks,” states Pamela. “They didn’t flinch and were excited to help however they could. In just a few weeks, we sewed over 4,000 masks and delivered them to our local city, Santa Fe Springs, so that they could distribute them to people in need.”

Bolstered by its unique package-centric approach and being in most organizations’ preferred choice lists, PRO-TECH shows no sign of slowing down. Driven by the zeal to combat any challenge that comes its way, the company is expanding its cleanroom capacity as well as its warehouse space. “We are very excited about the future. We have manufacturing facilities in Texas as well as California, and we see strong growth in both locations,” informs Pamela.

As technology continues to nurture innovation in the medical devices market, PRO-TECH believes that the packaging space will follow suit. The company will continue to invest in cutting edge solutions that provide greater peace of mind to customers by ensuring that their devices are sterilized, protected, and delivered safely to patients. “It is very gratifying and we take great pride in working with partners large and small to help them become successful and provide life-saving technologies to their patients,” concludes Aaron. 

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