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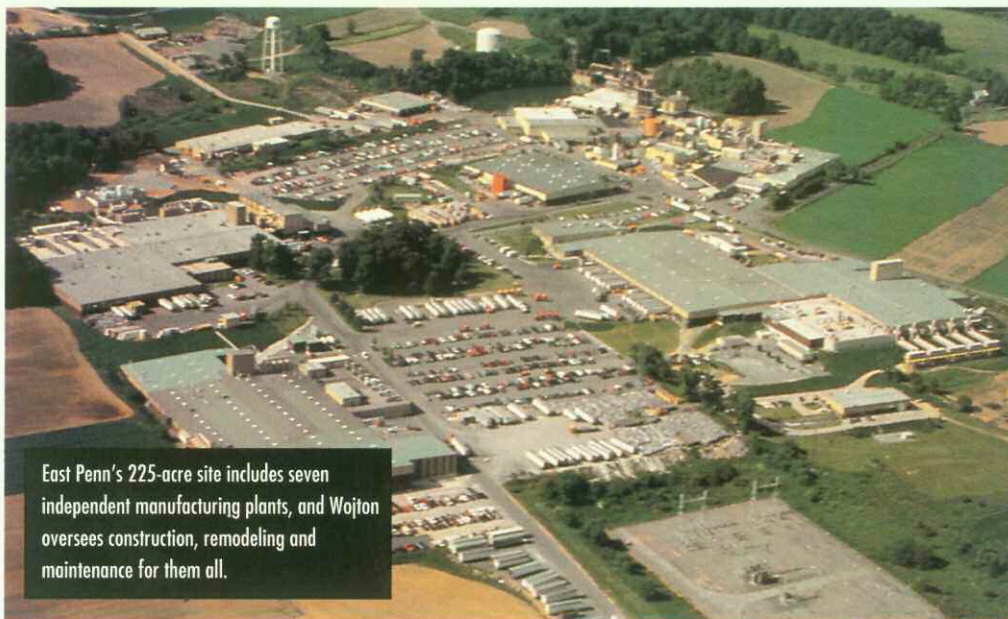
*A manager of
manufacturing,
construction and
environmental
concerns*

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AT 58, DON WOJTON has mastered a list of responsibilities that would daunt many executives. ¶As vice president of manufacturing services for East Penn Manufacturing Company, Inc., a maker of lead acid storage batteries and cable products in Lyon Station, Pennsylvania, Wojton (pronounced Woy'ton) supervises all activities that support manufacturing on the 225-acre site. ¶This includes operating a laundry handling about 6,000 pieces of laundry each day, overseeing health and safety specialists and assisting with the purchase and installation of manufacturing and warehouse equipment. Wojton is also responsible for environmental issues at the Lyon Station site, such as its impact upon air and water quality and the treatment of its hazardous waste. "Before I took these over, I had hair," he jokes. ¶And finally, Wojton oversees construction, remodeling and maintenance for the site's seven independent manufacturing plants and various support buildings—15 buildings in all. ¶East Penn makes all of its products—Deka and Lynx batteries and numerous private brands—at Lyon Station. Wojton has

BY CAROL LLOYD ILLUSTRATION BY WILL HILLENBRAND

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East Penn's 225-acre site includes seven independent manufacturing plants, and Wojton oversees construction, remodeling and maintenance for them all.



DON WOJTON

"WE'VE HAD NO PROBLEMS AT ALL WITH ANY OF OUR BUTLER BUILDINGS"

been in charge of construction at the site since 1980, five years after he joined the company as senior methods engineer.

With so much to oversee, Wojton concentrates on eliminating problems. This has led to a synergistic arrangement with Burkey Construction, a Butler Builder® in nearby Reading, Pennsylvania.

Burkey was one of three contractors asked to bid on Wojton's first construction project for East Penn—a 150,000-square-foot plant to produce automotive batteries. As the most competitive bidder, Burkey got the job.

Since then, Wojton has overseen Burkey in the construction of six more Butler buildings for East Penn—roughly half a million square feet of construction—and there is another 24,000-square-foot manufacturing plant currently in progress.

One reason for the two companies' 17-year relationship has been the dependability of Butler building systems. "We've had no problems at all with any of our Butler buildings," says Wojton. "That first building sold us on Butler, and even if we get a bid that's closely competitive, we'll stick with Butler, because we know what we'll get."

Wojton also knows he'll have no problems with Burkey on the job. He uses the word "relationship" and "trust" liberally while talking about the contractor.

Stan Graczyk, Burkey's job superintendent for all of the East Penn construction for 15 years, became a permanent fixture on the East Penn plant site.

"It was really as if Stan was one of our own employees," says Wojton. Before Graczyk retired in 1991, he spent several months with his successor, Earl Brandt, to familiarize him with the operations at East Penn. "Earl has picked up where Stan left off, and the transition went very smoothly," Wojton says.

Because of the magnitude of the building activity on the site, East Penn has in-house personnel who take part in some of the construction processes.

"Once we get a building under roof," says Wojton, "our guys pretty much take over, putting in the plumbing and electrical work." The site is hilly and difficult to build on, and East Penn does much of its own excavation and backfill work, as well.

Years of such close teamwork have created a special bond between Wojton and Bill Gerth, his primary contact with Burkey. "I've known Bill since 1976, and he's never led me astray," says Wojton.

Wojton capitalizes on the same kind of personal interaction with his own people. The process for new construction begins among a group of electrical, civil, mechanical and structural

engineers and designers, who create a preliminary layout. The goal is to meet the basic requirements of the manufacturing process and equipment, which in turn define the size and the shape of the building. After this is finished, Wojton discusses the layouts with management and seeks feedback from the employees who will work in the new facility.

"We frequently post proposed layout changes on bulletin boards and give the employees time to come up with suggestions, which we incorporate in the final drawings," he says.

It's an approach that pays off handsomely. "The people on the shop floor have a lot of good ideas, and they'll save you a lot of money, if you'll just sit down and talk to them," Wojton says.

These management techniques fit well with the interactive philosophy of the company, and the usually low-key Wojton becomes almost effusive when he talks about his job satisfaction.

"I enjoy everything about my job," he says. "Our company president, Delight Breidegam, Jr., is a 'people' person, and there is a great work ethic here. People here love to take a challenge and run with it."

Wojton's satisfaction also extends to his involvement with the BCI (Battery Council International), a trade organization that represents the vast majority of the nation's lead battery manufacturers and recyclers. He has been a member of the environmental, industry relations, and industrial health committees of the BCI for the past 17 years and spends much of his time in Washington, D.C., developing comments on environmental legislation and lobbying for the Council.

That brings him to another source of professional pride. "East Penn has promoted battery recycling for many years," he says. The company's warehouses collect old batteries and return them to the Lyon Station site, where all of the plastic, acid and lead are recovered and used to manufacture new products.

"This is nothing new—it's something we've done since the company was started."

Although it's perhaps the most challenging thing he has undertaken, Wojton sees his work with the BCI as an ongoing mission to help educate the public about battery recycling and help enact fair and responsible environmental legislation.

"We're dealing with a couple of materials the general public sees as bad news—lead and acid. We have to work hard to help change perceptions so that people understand these materials are not all that bad if they're properly handled." ■