


CONVERSATION


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 United Equipment Accessories

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Please give us a brief history on the company. How did United Equipment Accessories make a name for itself in the wind energy industry?

Vern Iserman founded United Equipment Accessories (UEA) in 1952 as a small manufacturing operation out of his garage in Waverly, Iowa, with its initial roots in the construction industry. Our original product was a component remote control kit that was used to remotely operate truck-mounted cranes and excavators from the rear cab. Schield Bantam, now known as Terex Cranes, was located just down the road and was the company's first customer. They needed a more reliable slip ring with an electrical rotary joint, so they contacted Vern to make that happen. The rest is history.

Our path into wind wasn't so different from our beginnings serving

the construction industry. We heard complaints from wind farm owners and operators of their slip rings from other suppliers having issues, so we started to supply our slip rings to the aftermarket. Eventually, OEMs heard about our success, and we were able to supply our products to the turbine OEMs.

We now have slip ring assemblies installed in wind turbines in parts of Europe, India, China, and, of course, all across the United States. I believe we have approximately 14,000 slip ring assemblies in the field to date just for turbine use. All of our products are manufactured and assembled at our single site location based in Waverly, and we have approximately 130 employees total.

What is the company's chief mission to the wind industry and its customers?

Simply put, we want to succeed where others have failed. To me, an ideal project involves a potential customer coming to us with a problem and then working with our engineering team to get them a solution.

Tell us about the range of products that UEA offers the wind energy industry.

For the wind industry, we manufacture slip ring assemblies primarily used as a component of the pitch control system to provide power and

data communication to or from the stationary tower to the rotary hub. We also provide slip ring products for power transmission through the yaw of the turbine. We have more designs available now than ever before, and we specialize in custom products, meaning we can provide a slip ring for just about any application.

How can those involved in the wind energy industry (such as wind farm owners and operators) benefit from working with UEA?

The major benefit of partnering with UEA is that just about anyone working with our product can get in touch with an engineer, like myself, who has a history with the product. Cutting out some of the excess lines of communication allows us to quickly diagnose and solve problems. For example, earlier this year, we were contacted by a site manager for a job, and we were able to be at that wind farm within four days of the call and have conversations with the site manager and technicians face-to-face. We were contacted about the issue on a Thursday afternoon, and we were on a flight that following Sunday and climbing a wind tower at the site that was located more than 1,000 miles away by Monday, essentially one business day later. It sounds simple, but it is extremely helpful because if there is an issue in the field, the very

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person experiencing the problems can get in direct contact with someone like me who can implement a design to solve the issue at hand. The wind industry can expect us to continue this level of customer service going forward.

Tell us about your role in the company and in engineering these components, and how you got involved in the wind energy industry.

I joined the company in 2011 for research and development purposes, and that led me to the wind industry. Our product had 50-plus years of proven experience in other industries, yet we were still as new as the wind industry was at the time. In 2013, I became part of a team that developed a new proprietary brush grade, pushing the life of the product up to 200 million revolutions. One of the main focuses of my position is to continue to improve the life and reliability of our slip ring products.

How does UEA set itself apart from other manufacturers like it in the wind industry?

Our customer service, along with our ability to provide a customized solution to a customer with the best form fit and function, as well as industry-leading technology allow us to stand out.

What is your outlook on the wind market following the recent five-year PTC extension and going into 2016? What does this stability mean for UEA, and what can the industry expect to see out of the company going forward?

The PTC extension is crucial for the industry. I believe it will help the industry become more competitive with oil and other nonrenewable energy sources. At UEA, we expect to see growth in the domestic wind market. As far as what to expect from UEA — continued reliability and great customer service. ↴

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