

secrets of success

Taking a look at the changing landscape of textile and hosiery, the O'Maras say they made a decision to begin catering more to specialty markets versus commodity.

by BRENT CHILDERS, Editor



Cones of O'Mara yarn at the Rutherford College facility.

Directions: Take I-40 east to Exit 113. Then get on the I-40 west entrance.

Confusing?

Not to the folks at O'Mara Incorporated.

The texturing and extruding machinery at O'Mara Inc. in Rutherford College, N.C. on a recent Thursday afternoon was spinning fiber like nobody's business.

The management at O'Mara Incorporated kind of want to keep it that way. And in today's highly competitive global yarn and fiber industry, who can blame them.

So you won't read here much detail about how nanotechnology is employed at O'Mara to make their fiber some of

the most sought-after by manufacturers in the home furnishings, hosiery and apparel segments.

Suffice it to say that O'Mara's foray into technological advances are paying dividends.

And while Chris O'Mara and his brother Tim naturally opt to keep their product development close to the vest, they recently extended Legwear Trends the opportunity to tour their facility and discuss a few other aspects of their business



strategy – in general terms of course.

Taking a look at the changing landscape of textile and hosiery, the O'Maras say they made a decision to begin catering more to specialty markets versus commodity.

It's a great fit for O'Mara, they say.

With specialty lines – be it in furniture fabrics or highly functional legwear – being developed with unique fiber and yarn products, it's that uniqueness that the O'Maras

say distinguishes the 35-year-old company from its competitors.

"That's what we do," says Chris O'Mara, the older brother who along with Tim serve as the company's sales representatives.

Housed in a modern and spacious – as well as immaculate – facility just off of one of North Carolina's main thoroughfares, O'Mara

Inc. currently employs 150 people.

The company was founded in 1970 by family patriarch Joseph O'Mara who began as an off-fiber broker and later purchased a texturing and extrusion operation in Guntersville, Ala., in 1985.

The company opened the texturing operation in Rutherford College in 1990. It added extrusion to the N.C. operation in 2003.

Joseph O'Mara, president, retains an

office in Devon, Pa., Joe Leirer serves as CFO; Gary Bradley serves as vice president of sales; Keith Reece is vice president of manufacturing; and Edward Lowell serves as operations manager.

Chris O'Mara says the consolidation of texturing and extrusion under one roof in 2003 gave the location several advantages.

Obviously the logistics involved in separate facilities added costs. In addition, being able to control the texturing and extrusion processes at the facility presented over savings – both in terms of tighter quality controls and an allowance of faster turnarounds on orders.

Catering to specialty markets where quick turnarounds are a lifeline, the O'Maras say the consolidation was a triple win.

There's a lot of talk these days about quick turns perhaps being one of the single most important advantages for domestic hosiery manufacturers.

The subject was discussed at a recent Hosiery Technology Center Advisory Board meeting at which industry executives stated the importance of being able to get a small order of yarn in five days.

As a supplier to the hosiery industry, Chris O'Mara believes the one-week turnaround goal is a real possibility although he believes realistically it will be closer to seven to 10 days.

As hosiery manufacturers continue to

CONT'D page 17

develop their own specialty lines, the importance of being able to get those products to retail in weeks rather than months will be critical in allowing the domestic manufacturing to define itself against offshore goods.

That's the ultimate goal: Brand domestic hosiery products with quick delivery.

Add to quick delivery the exceptional quality of the domestic product and that's the branding formula the O'Mara's have staked out as a yarn and fiber supplier.

That's one other aspect of O'Mara that the two brothers don't mind sharing – the fact that they produce a product that 100 percent domestic. No outsourcing. None.

Chris O'Mara passionately disagrees with suggestions that the domestic textile industry is in its final death throes – to be forever vanquished to the pages of Legwear Trend's Roots feature in five years or less.

He says he is offended by statements like those made in a Jan. 6, 2005 Charlotte Observer editorial that said North Carolina lawmakers should not develop economic policy aimed at the state's traditional industries – since as the

editorial stated, those industries will be gone in five years.

Chris O'Mara agrees that traditional textile companies won't be around as they existed 20 years ago. But he knows – from his own company as an example – that there are textile companies in North Carolina and elsewhere in the U.S that are taking advantage of new technology and new business strategies to position themselves for the long haul.

Textile companies may be smaller and may have to operate on smaller profit margins than years past but he believes they will still be here – providing good paying skilled manufacturing jobs that aren't found in many service industry sectors.

So if there are any state lawmakers inclined to believe the suggestion found in a newspaper editorial, they might want to travel up to Rutherford College and visit with the folks at O'Mara.

And they may want to take note of the directions.

Yes, there's quite a few textile plants that have exited the old strategies of the past. But there are equally that number out there now who have gotten right



An employee in quality control checks the product.

back on the entrance ramp with innovation and American know-how that's putting out a quality product in record time.

Take Fashion Avenue and you're at O'Mara.

Quality Greige Hosiery



We have been supplying Quality Greige Goods to the Hosiery Industry over 40 years. We produce a full range of sizes from infant to 12-15. Rib or Pattern in Men's & Women's Styles.

Equipment Available for Production:
 V4 1/2 84N Lonati
 V4 1/2 84N Lonati EI
 V4 84N Lonati Bravo
 V4 168N Lonati Bravo
 V3 1/2 132N Lonati Bravo
 V4 132N Lonati Bravo

Ruppe Hosiery Inc.

P.O. Box 517
 300-4 East Gold Street
 Kings Mountain, NC 28086

Tel: 704-739-4537
 Fax: 704-739-8150
 E-Mail: ruppehosiery@carolina.rr.com

L&R Knitting

Specializing in Distinctive Products and Customer Service

84 N Link-Link, Ribs, Jacquards

6350 Claude Brittain Road
 Hickory, NC 28602

Phone: (828) 874-2960
 Fax: (828) 879-4880

BEAR CREEK HOSIERY, INC.

5 84N Concepts - 4 84N Haw Rivers
 3 3/4 108N KN Dials - 4 108N LONATI 454JS

227 Wright Road
 PO Drawer 519
 Biscoe, NC 27209

CONTACT: Kerit Maness
 TEL: 910-428-2188
 FAX: 910-428-2781

RUMI

Single Cylinder Sock Machines For Any Application
 Fine Gauge or Heavy Gauge
 Normal Terry, Sandwich Terry, Electronic Sinker Selection
 6 Colors per Course Patterns
 Phone: 828-403-1595 Fax: 828-437-9231
 E-Mail: jlaws@hci.net