

Industrial Supply

THE VOICE OF DISTRIBUTION

A Direct Business Media, LLC Publication



Technology, Service and Experience Motivate Wisconsin Industrial Supply Co.

Latest tools, real collaborations, and unchanging values drive thriving tool distributor business



Given the right tools, almost any job can be done well. For a company with 30 years of experience providing tool solutions, having the latest tools is essential. In fact, the company's owner gives the WIDIA tools he supplies his highest praise – they validate what he's doing – creating value for his customers.

For Wisconsin Industrial Supply Company (Franksville, Wis.), the right tools are not only the products they sell, but the principles backing them up as well. "At one time or another, we've likely sold every carbide line out there," says George Yust III, owner and president. "Supplying high-quality products is important, but it's always been our belief that principled-based leadership will drive the kind of changes we want to see in the marketplace."

Honesty and integrity are two of the principles Yust brought to his business when he established it in the upper flat in Racine, Wis., he shared with his wife Cheri and his young family in 1985. “I was working for an industrial distributor in Racine at the time and thought maybe I could take a shot at being on my own selling cutting tools,” he says. “Working with contract machine shops, it became important early on to not only know what you were talking about, but also manage expectations realistically. For us, that meant the classic ‘under-promise and over-deliver.’”

Classic was also a hallmark of the young Wisconsin Industrial Supply Company. “We were and still are the classic German-heritage company,” Yust says. “You were financially conservative, you never considered debt, and you did what you said you’d do – you really had to know your stuff.”

Not only know your stuff, but prove it. “We were running our tools out in the field,” he explains. “You find out fast that it was the strength of the tools that formed our knowledge and experience of how to bring value to the customer.”

While many product lines came and went early in the game, Yust recalls becoming involved with WIDIA tools early in his business. “Running so many tools out in the field, customers saw the value in the WIDIA products immediately,” he recalls. “The product line along with quality and customer support has only grown over the years.

First-Hand Experience

WIDIA quality isn’t something Yust simply passes along to his customers and sales people, it’s something he discovered first-hand. “At one time, the business was experiencing a downturn and we were doing anything we could to keep things going, including tool repair,” Yust recalls. “I was running boxes of cheapo end mills rebuilding boring bars in our shop when I ran out and needed to grab one of my premium WIDIA mills off the shelf.” Yust pauses, and smiles, “It just kept on cutting. One day, two days, three days... when that one mill did what it was taking me five boxes of other mills to do, the light went on. I was doing what I now tell my customers to do. I needed to get 200 boring bars out the door yesterday, and the cost was going down the more I used the WIDIA mill. Had I not done it myself, I’d still not be crystal-clear on it.”

True to his heritage, Yust took his experience and plowed it right back into his business. “Having our own grinding and tool repair operation also grew into an open-testing policy. If our customers need to test a tool to see if they can improve a process, our shop is their shop. That’s one dynamic we use in training our people, that our business is not a sales organization, it’s the enabler of our customers’ successes.”



Customer Validation

A major jobbing machine shop customer that prefers to remain anonymous is outspoken about WISC and WIDIA. “Wisconsin Industrial Supply has been a resource of ours for 30-plus years, and service hasn’t changed from day one,” says the vice president and general manager, himself a company veteran of 30-plus years. “They are knowledgeable and responsive – if we’re having an issue on cutting performance, they can suggest a new tool or new cutting configuration, grind out specials, and use their in-house testing to make sure it’s workable.

“We have a wide selection of metalworking requirements and challenges – machining

WISC associates Shawn Hinkle (left) and Mike Riley discuss customer orders

castings or turning shaft components for agriculture, automotive, or a wide range of general engineering requirements,” he continues. “We rely on WISC to stay on top of the new tool coatings, grades, and

configurations from WIDIA, and they’re constantly improving. After 30 years, we just need to ask for a recommendation and George delivers one that works.”

As a result, this shop is “almost exclusively WIDIA,” in the general manager’s words, including solid end mills, indexable inserts, and holmaking tools for a growing range of machining requirements. “Some people work to get to the cottage or vacation,” he says with a smile. “At WISC, tooling is their life and we have no need to question their knowledge.”

It also helps that WIDIA shares the same values regarding product and process improvement. Following the success of WIDIA’s VariMill I™ and VariMill II™ end mills, for example, the new VariMill II ER™ end mill offers the superior performance of its predecessors with added features that enhance stability.

Like the VariMill II, VariMill II ER end mills are engineered with five unequally spaced flutes. However, unlike with the existing VariMill product line, the eccentric relief (ER) available with this new tool’s cutting edges provides greater edge strength and enables high feeds and metal removal rates. The VariMill II ER end mill has a different taper core than VariMill I and II for increased stability and robust performance,

Not the Same Old Grind

What others may see as tired platitudes of partnering with customers for mutual success, Yust sees as dynamic, living principles, becoming even more important in the 21st Century. “Communications and the speed of information transfer is changing everything in business,” he says. “With such speed and access, the information itself is becoming undervalued – a commodity. When all products are commoditized and available on line, why not buy everything on ebay and cut out the middleman?

“We respond to that in a number of ways. We specialize. We focus on a select group of technology suppliers we feel share our vision of what the market’s going to do. We also get involved in our customers’ businesses. We integrate so deeply with our customers that it’s beyond any question we owe them all the data, information, knowledge, and wisdom we can. WIDIA helps us deliver that.”

Yust has a vision for his company, in his words that it become and remain “the toolroom they wish they could have.” Building that vision takes delivering real-world results to hard-eyed job shops throughout his region. “Our customers have to grow for us to remain in business,” he says. “Our employees (including George Yust IV grinding specials out in the shop) have to see that securing our customers’ future is the best way of securing our own. And the third leg of the stool is our vendors. WIDIA gives us the number-one reason why we would ever represent a product line – that it validates what we’re doing. This is how we create the value that uncovers future opportunities.”



Cheri and George Yust III and George Yust IV of Wisconsin Industrial Supply Co.