

Best Practices: JBT Helps Customers Reach New Heights

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Airports are a hub of activity with jets landing and taking off; a procession of taxis picking people up and dropping people off and luggage carousels, trams, and baggage carriers all circulating the things people need for travel. In Orlando, Florida, John Bean Technologies (JBT), manufactures the fleet of equipment that keeps this current of activity efficiently moving.

“JBT’s Orlando facility specializes in the design, assembly, and testing of airport mobile ground support equipment,” says Josh Parkin, Plant Manager for JBT-Orlando. “We make specialty aircraft pushback tractors, cargo loaders, and aircraft deicers; basically all the equipment that you see driving around the airports.”

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If you’ve ever flown in North America, chances are you’ve walked across one of the boarding bridges that enable passengers to board the aircraft (almost certainly on a bridge made by JBT technologies’ Ogden Utah location). Those bridges are another example of essential equipment that helps maintain the flow of motion from terminal to plane.

Founded in 1884 in California, JBT began in the food and agricultural business with the founders’ invention of a continuous spray pump used for applying insecticides to cherry trees. This company has now evolved into a global company with divisions dedicated to food technology as well as aeronautical technology. In Orlando, JBT ‘s focus is the aviation market.

“We service most of the major commercial airlines around the world as well as major freight consolidators,” adds Parkin. “Some of these airlines have been with JBT for nearly half a century. It’s a testament to the quality and integrity of our products and services.”

Best Practices: Customer Focus

The strength and viability of long-term relationships often parallel the longevity of JBT’s products that often last well beyond thirty years. It’s this longevity that customers have come to expect when working with JBT.

“We provide maintenance and service to our customers to ensure they get the most out of the equipment throughout the product’s life,” says Parkin. “Because of this commitment, our relationships are really a partnership and this is something we value at JBT.”

The “Customer First” methodology is a core value of JBT and is central to any and all significant decisions.

“We ask ourselves how something we do will affect our customer?” says Parkin. “Will this create value for our customers as well as their end-users? This is what is at the heart of our corporate culture and it goes into every aspect of our product and service offerings.”

JBT has programs that include the “Voice of the Customer” which encompass a range of metrics, including surveys, industry events, plant tours and meetings that serve as a catalyst for conversations, problem-solving, and idea exchanges.

“We will regularly assemble a cluster of industry clients together at an event and sponsor a forum where our customers can exchange ideas with each other,” says Parkin. “We facilitate these vibrant idea exchanges and then take this information back to our team and look for ways to implement the best suggestions.”

Parkin also cites JBT University as another way to engage the customer and meet their needs. Offered in multiple languages, JBT University offers virtual and in-person training solutions for customers by pairing them with the most experienced and skilled technicians that enable them to keep their equipment always running at peak performance.

“JBT University has been especially vital during the global COVID-19 pandemic,” says Parkin. “Leveraging our virtual training courses has allowed us to maintain safety protocols while also meeting the needs of the customer.”

SMBE Awards Process

Learning they were a finalist in the Florida Sterling Manufacturing Business Excellence Awards process was a welcomed opportunity.

“We’re very proud of our employees and our products,” says Parkin, “so we were thrilled to learn we were nominated. We were ready to jump in and participate in the rigorous evaluation process. JBT has a ‘continuous improvement’ mindset so while we’re proud of our products, we’re always looking to improve and never be satisfied with the status quo.”

Industry leaders concur.

"JBT is one of Florida's leading manufacturers in the design, production and support of airport grounded equipment worldwide," says Patti Gander, their FloridaMakes Business Advisor. "Their leadership values center around what the customer needs and as those needs change, JBT is

skilled at adapting. They serve global markets and JBT sets the bar for excellence in this category."

Citing their involvement with the Manufacturers Association of Central Florida (MACF) as key to their nomination, Parkin encourages other manufacturers to reach out and get involved with their regional association.

"MACF has been a great resource for us. Much of our supply chain is based in central Florida. MACF provides us with a platform to network with other potential partners, but it's also been a great resource for recruiting talent. It's all about having a great workforce and our nomination for this award is truly a testament to the people who make JBT's products the standard of excellence in this sector."