

Rx for Success

Pharma Tech Industries enjoys strategic growth in a strategic industry



we can continue to move into the higher-scrutiny drug environment.”

Before the Efferdent operation came to Royston, the Quick Start team visited the Puerto Rico plant where the product was previously being made. The team members documented the manufacturing processes and, upon their return, created materials to teach PTI’s 35 new employees how to mix, form and package the tablets.

“When you’re expanding, all the work is done up front. That’s where the process documentation and the training manuals Quick Start created were invaluable,” says Coile. “We spent weeks preparing to be able to push the button and make everything work the first day, and the ability to do that comes from the people involved. Quick Start provided us a level of support to make that possible.”

“I like to say, we make everything from bottle caps to kneecaps,” Lee Dickinson, vice president and general manager of Pharma Tech Industries (PTI) says, donning a lab coat and hairnet before entering the company’s Royston, Ga., plant.

Indeed, about half the items in the average family bathroom can be found in various stages of manufacture at this 260,000-square-foot facility. Plastic resin pellets arrive by train and are formed into sticks tipped with cotton from nearby bales. They leave as packaged swabs. Plastic bottles are molded, labeled and filled with Johnson’s Baby Powder and other brands of cosmetic talc. Toothbrush handles, bath powder, and yes, even parts for artificial hip joints and kneecaps, come from the Franklin County facility.

PTI is based in Missouri, and began making and packaging pharmaceutical products there in 1972. In 2005, PTI acquired the Royston facility from pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson, when J&J decided to outsource its manufacturing operations.

“I spent about eight years of my career here trying to keep Johnson &

Johnson from closing this plant,” says Dickinson. “But, we were able to get with Pharma Tech to keep it open. There were 307 people working at the plant when it closed in August 2005. One week later, 135 hourly and 25 salaried personnel were hired back. J&J and PTI worked together to make that happen.”

Goal-oriented

Curtis Coile, PTI plant manager; Peggy Hendrix, HR manager; and Dickinson weren’t content just to save the plant. They set about expanding it.

“Our challenge is to remain lean and competitive and small — all while growing,” says Coile. “We have to use all the resources we can to stay viable, and Quick Start is a great help with that.”

Quick Start is the company’s partner in its latest expansion — the addition of Efferdent denture cleansing tablets to the array of products produced in Royston. Johnson & Johnson was looking for a new location to produce the brand, and the PTI team saw a logical next phase in their careful evolution.

“We are the best and biggest in the world at working with powder; the next step was to press powder into a tablet,” says Dickinson. “Now that we’re FDA qualified in tableting,

Below, from left: Lashunda McGlockling, powder attendant, inspects bottles of Johnson’s Baby Powder; Fay Sanders, Siebler operator, unpacks Efferdent boxes; the boxes are then filled with tablets that have been mixed, formed and sealed into pouches at the Royston facility.



At right (from left): Pharma Tech Vice President and General Manager Lee Dickinson, President Carl Oberg and Plant Manager Curtis Coile. Below: Annie Rucker, swab operator, inspects cotton swabs made and packaged at the Royston facility.



Made in the USA

How does PTI keep current contracts and even earn new ones when competitors overseas are promising to manufacture the same product with lower labor costs? By offering their clients the total package, from high technology to continuous innovation. Whether buying machinery on eBay, writing their own software programs, or inventing a space-saving hopper to keep Efferdent powders from

separating, the PTI team specializes in creative solutions to seemingly impossible challenges.

“Our clients look at the total value of what we give them, not just the price,” says Coile. “We tell our customers, ‘All we need from you is a purchase order and specifications; we’ll take care of the rest.’”

“When it comes to learning new processes, we leverage what we know to get into what we don’t

know,” adds Dickinson. “Quick Start helps us find out what it takes to do it and then trains people to do it properly.”

Company President Carl Oberg says each expansion the company undertakes makes his job easier. “I go out and tell clients the PTI story,” he says. “Six years ago, that story was, ‘We do topical powders.’ Here in Royston, there is now a much bigger story to tell.” 

