

## Specialty Cable Corporation: it's all special

If ever there was a company one would expect to be a natural for this feature, it would be Specialty Cable Corporation (SCC) in Wallingford, Connecticut, so its responses were singled out. Below, SCC Vice President of Sales Jim Streifel discusses his company's 'special' focus.

*WJI: How does your company choose a specialty cable to develop, such as the described one you have chosen to highlight?*

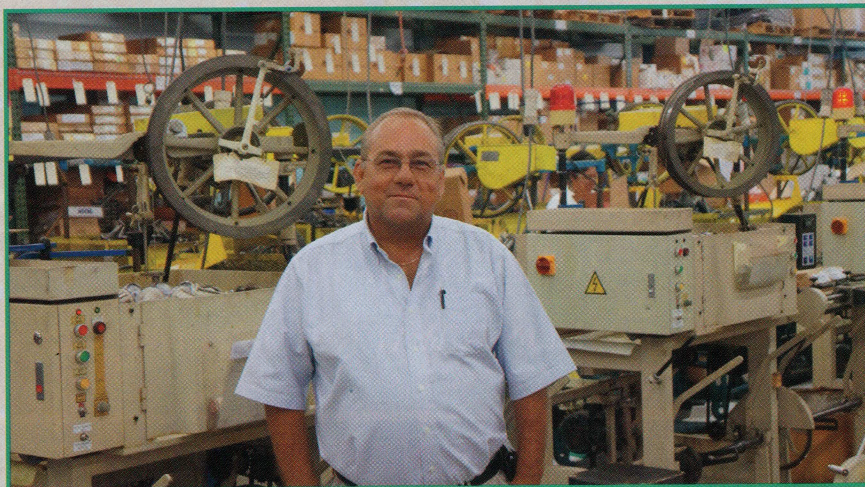
**Streifel:** You asked us to focus on a single specialty cable, but as you might guess from our company name basically e-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g we make is a specialty cable, so our experience is different from most other companies. We manufacture a variety of cables to service many markets. Our foundation has been flight critical wire and cable for the military and commercial aerospace markets, but we also service the medical, heat-tracing, industrial, commercial and high-end audio markets.

Many customers purchase special proprietary constructions from us that have been developed by both parties to address an unique situation for which only a specially designed cable would work.

I could point out a few that we find especially interesting, such as the polyimide cable we build for robots used in a nuclear power plant that, once they go in, will never be seen again. Or, there's the high-end audio cables that use cryogenetic copper conductors to eliminate noises caused by the earth's north and south poles. Additionally, we produce cables that are used in our most advanced military weaponry. Seldom is our production ever off the shelf. That

makes for a dynamic workplace that's never boring.

Many of our cables start out from a concept or an actual need from a customer with a very specific application that was not being met from any cables commercially available. Going back to the above nuclear power plant cable, our customer needed that for its robot that would perform maintenance



*Specialty Cable Corporation Vice President of Sales and Marketing Jim Streifel.*

on the reactors while they were in operation. As you can imagine, it is not an easy job shutting down and restarting such a site. The plan was to have this robot stay inside the reactor for several years performing the necessary maintenance, eliminating the shut-down need. Our customer gave us the cable requirements and details about the harsh environment it would need to operate in. Once we understood all the requirements, we went to work designing a cable that was up to the task.

*WJI: Would a specialty product always stem from a specific customer request, or could you develop a product if you believe that the market would welcome it?*

**Streifel:** Not all of our constructions are specific to a company or individual use. Many have been developed over the years as industries have evolved. A great example of this is the aerospace industry, which has continued to redesign and refine the aircrafts. The cables have needed to become lighter and able to handle higher temperatures to operate in increasingly hostile environments. Those conditions forced us to refine and redesign our cable constructions.

*WJI: For such a product, do you start R&D with a high degree of confidence of the final result?*

**Streifel:** When we first engineer and select our constructions for our prototypes, we do start out that way, but experience has shown that little

actually goes as planned. Adjustments inevitably have to be made during the process, from concept to final production runs, something needs to be adjusted. Yes, that can be frustrating, but it's also exciting learning how our designs actually perform in the real world, and what we need to do to make them even better.

*WJI: Do you set specific time goals?*

**Streifel:** We assemble a product development team for every new design to work on the project. This usually consists of individuals from engineering, production, quality and sales. An initial timeline is set for all stages of development. These timelines will vary depending on the

difficulty of the cable requirements, design, material, manufacturing and testing criteria. We usually meet every two weeks to discuss the status of the project or more if the project requires more immediate attention.

*WJI: Do you patent your products?*

**Streifel:** Many of our processes are proprietary and our new constructions are customer specific. The cables are typically low volume and will not be mass produced, so the cost associated with securing a patent is usually not justified. There are a handful of other companies that may have the technical and processing abilities to design and manufacture the cables, but because of the time it takes to development and the low volume, most of our competitors choose to pass. Our ability to move the process quickly and efficiently enables us to cost effectively design and manufacture the cables.

*WJI: Do you seek to have specialty products represent a certain percentage of your revenues?*

**Streifel:** New products and new designs are key to our business strategy as well as our future. New



designs force us to continually keep pace with the ever-changing industry needs. Our policy is to build on our past successes, with an emphasis on continual improvement. This

keeps us sharp and experts in our industry.

*WJI: What aspect did the editor not ask about that would have been of interest?*

**Streifel:** I cannot overstate how important quality is. Along with new products and designs you must have a quality product. I know, that sounds like a given, but our customers today expect nothing less than an exceptionally high-quality product. Of course, they also want it delivered on time and at a fair price, but quality trumps everything, and that focus drives us. SCC meets or exceeds the industry's most stringent of standards. We have numerous QPLs, UL and CSA ratings. Our quality systems are recognized by AS9100 and ISO 9001. What we do is too important for us to approach our work without being prepared to be the "special" company that we know we are.

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