

Business



Local mower maker remains a cut above

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Being able to adapt to changing markets is crucial for a business. Kut Kwick Corp. has been adapting for more than 65 years, and is one of the oldest manufacturing companies in Brunswick.

"The company has experienced many changes in direction that have enabled it to survive in today's volatile business environment," owner Bob Torras Sr. said.

Kut Kwick opened its doors in 1944. The company was originally owned by George Tresher of Glynn County and was purchased by Torras in 1978. The business began with the production of a specialized saw for the local pulp wood industry. But once the times began to change, so, too, did the business' product line.

"This machine became obsolete with the invention of the chain saw. Kut Kwick reacted by changing the 3-foot round tree saw blade into a mower blade, with an enclosure over it, to make the first of the commercial out-front rotary mowing machines," Torras explained.

The industry, as a whole, began to shift in the 1970s and 1980s. Competition rose when large-scale manufacturing firms en-

tered the market.

"These companies were too much for a small company like Kut Kwick to compete with. Reacting to this, the company's focus and product line was directed to specialty equipment," Torras said.

"The company produced and patented a new product line, including the first steep-slope mowing machines, and the first hydraulically driven mowing machines."

Competition and adaptation continued to drive Kut Kwick's product line.

"In the early 2000s, the Chinese entered the marketplace and, very quickly, the entire manufacturing environment changed again. The company once again changed its product line to large, high-priced machines and 'niche market' machines," Torras said.

Upgrades were key. Kut Kwick re-evaluated its slope machine and developed a line of forest-clearing machines. Torras says this decision proved beneficial.

"Over the last 10 years the Kut Kwick heavy-duty steep slope mowing machines have developed into the company's mainstay product. These zero-turn machines cut on slopes up to 40 degrees, in very difficult commercial applications," Torras said.

New equipment, including a much larger slope mowing machine and a machine designed



Nick Nichols/The Brunswick News

Bob Torras Sr., owner of Kut Kwick Corp. in Brunswick, said the 65-year-old business has survived through innovation. He stands in front of the prototype for his company's latest mower.

"They are sold to governmental and large commercial buyers for use on highways, parks and similar applications."

This business model has proven successful. By switching things up, Torras has seen an expanding customer base.

"Sales and revenues have both trended up in recent years. The company's current year is expected to exceed the best of the last four years," he said.

New equipment, including a much larger slope mowing machine and a machine designed

to fight forest fires, is ready for 2010.

"This patented 'green' forest machine removes from forested areas the underbrush and small trees, so that the spread of a forest fire can be controlled without damage to the ecology," Torras said. "These new machines are expected to result in increased sales that can dwarf the current operation. This is expected to lead to an increase in work force on the manufacturing side, in sales force, and in office staff, as well."

Torras is considering relocating the current operation from 1927 Newcastle St. to an area with room to grow.

"The company has continued to operate in its very old building while a decision is made whether or not the (Glynn County) jail will be built across the street. If the jail is built downtown, the 21 acres where the company is will be used for industrial or similar purposes and the mower manufacturing facility will be constructed in the vicinity of the existing plant," Torras said.

"Should the jail be moved outside of the downtown area, the property will be developed for a higher use and the plant will be relocated to a site farther out in the Brunswick area."

Torras, as owner of two parcels of land in the block of Newcastle, I, Reynolds and J streets that the Glynn County Commission needs to expand the jail into that block, has challenged through the courts the county's ability to use its eminent domain power to force him to sell.

The Georgia Court of Appeals has ruled that the county can force him to sell, but Torras has said he would seek a review of that decision by the Georgia Supreme Court.