



Myron Schultz, Director of Sales & Marketing, maintains constant contact with his representatives throughout the USA.

It's been said that, if you build a better mouse trap, the world will beat a path to your door. The same can also be stated about controlling dust.

For the past 35-plus years, the world truly has beaten a path to **W. Schultz Fur Manufacturing**, better known to those in the janitorial/sanitary industry as **Lambskin Specialties**, located in **Winnipeg, Manitoba**.

The company continues to build upon its initial success, which began when it introduced wool dusters to the jan/san marketplace over three decades ago. Today, it has grown into a respected manufacturer and supplier of many cleaning items such as wool, feather and synthetic dusters; applicator and polishing pads; and window, floor and automotive care products.

Through the years, Lambskin Specialties has focused its efforts on two fronts — providing goods and services for the jan/san cleaning industry; and serving the retail market (particularly in Canada) with its line of shearling apparel, footwear and accessories.

"On the cleaning industry side, our range of products has greatly expanded," said **Myron Schultz, Director of Sales and Marketing** for Lambskin Specialties.

It was Schultz's grandfather, **William Schultz**, who started the initial business over 60 years ago by supplying fur trim to the garment industry. His son (Myron's father), **Albert Schultz**, later joined the company and helped



Partner and Production Director Melvyn Pollins oversees the factory operations.

LAMBSKIN SPECIALTIES

35 Years Of Providing Customers With Dust Control & Cleaning Products

By Harrell Kerkhoff
Maintenance Sales News Editor

steer it toward sheepskin products as styles and preferences changed.

It was also Albert, current president of Lambskin Specialties, who helped the company enter the cleaning industry in the 1960s.

"As my father tells the story, he was at a local

as window cleaning and floor maintenance products. We also offer different materials other than sheepskin," Schultz said. "For example, it was unthinkable for us at one time to offer a synthetic applicator pad, but it's now a very solid product that we manufacture.

"Along with offering new products, we've also created displays and packaging for our distributors to help them sell more efficiently to their customers."

Lambskin Specialties is a privately-held company. Myron Schultz is a partner in the business as is **Melvyn Pollins**, who has been with the organization for over 35 years.

"When you own a company like this, you wear many different hats and keep your eyes on all aspects of the business," Schultz said. "We do conduct sales internationally and want to do more in this arena, but our main focus has certainly been within North America."

Although Lambskin Specialties' customers can be found in many locations, the company has remained true to its Canadian origin, keeping its headquarters in Winnipeg.

"The biggest benefit is that we don't have to pay for cold storage," Schultz said with a laugh, when speaking of the company's southern Manitoba home. "It stays dry here in the summer and it gets very cold in the winter.

"You can set up a good business virtually anywhere. However, if you were to look at a map and ask yourself, 'Where am I going to set up the ideal business for manufacturing dusters?' Winnipeg would probably not be the place you would choose. This is particularly true when serving customers in the United States."

Be that as it may, Schultz said Manitoba's capital city, with a population of over 685,000, has been the historical home of the company and that business is conducted efficiently and effectively.

"We have access to all markets — east and west, north and south — although you can't get much farther north than Winnipeg," Schultz said. "Where we are located complements many of our products such as our sheepskin clothing line, which is designed for cold weather. Regarding our cleaning side, these are products for all kinds of weather."

LAMBSKIN SPECIALTIES MISSION STATEMENT

"Our mission is to be your source for the finest dusting products and maintenance accessories; earning your respect, confidence and loyalty through quality products, outstanding selection, continual product innovation, exceptional service, and our commitment to the maintenance supply industry. Our products are guaranteed to satisfy for quality and effectiveness; they will deliver the highest level of performance in the jobs for which they have been designed."



Melvyn Pollins (left) and Myron Schultz examine a new stock of duster skins.

train cargo loading dock some 35 to 40 years ago and noticed a package of dusters which arrived from Australia. My father called the people who received the package and told them he could produce a similar product locally. This is how we entered the cleaning industry. The **Dust Wand** lamb's wool duster was born," Myron Schultz said. "The company used to be very small — my grandfather, father and a couple of other workers. It was an old-country type of company. Through the years, however, changes have been very dramatic."

In addition to the expansion of its duster line, Lambskin Specialties has produced other cleaning items over the years to satisfy various jan/san distributor and end-user needs.

"We have become involved with such items

A few years ago, Lambskin Specialties underwent an expansion, moving into a larger facility in Winnipeg. It continues to expand its product base as well, such as now manufacturing window sleeves under the Window Pro line. The company also has introduced a line of Window Pro Squeegees.

Staying True To Its Roots As A Manufacturer

Although changes have occurred within Lambskin Specialties in terms of the types of products it offers, the company still remains primarily a manufacturer of goods.

Most of what Lambskin Specialties offers to the cleaning industry is manufactured at its Winnipeg facility. There are, however, some products that the company does buy from other manufacturers, made to Lambskin Specialties' specifications.

Schultz feels one of his company's main strengths stems from being a direct manufacturer of virtually all of its products.

"Most of the items that go out of our building have been manufactured by us. This gives comfort to distributors about the quality of our products," he said. "We are able to be flexible to the needs of not only our distributors, but also to their customers.

"For example, we are currently designing a new product for a distributor who has a customer with a particular need. Probably six or more of our current products were developed specifically because distributors expressed various needs, through their customers, for those products. **Dust Wand** continues to be the flagship of our line."

Schultz said he believes strongly in the value that jan/san distributors bring to the cleaning industry. The company sells to these distributors through a network of independent sales representatives who are stationed across North America, primarily in the United States.

"Our focus is dealing with traditional jan/san distributor houses," Schultz said. "We also work with some hardware, floorcare, and specialty houses that have more of a retail clientele, offering products to the home market. We do stay out of the mass retail market. Our primary focus has been, currently is, and will continue to be, the janitorial distribution market."

There are several key areas that independent sales reps for Lambskin Specialties stress about the company to new distributors looking to do business. The first of these areas is the company's focus on service, Schultz said.

"Our turn-around time on orders is something that we are extremely proud to mention. Our sales representatives often tell us, 'If I had 10 more vendors like you, I would have fewer gray hairs.' This is an area that we stress," he said.

Nothing happens at Lambskin Specialties without the input of Office Manager Faye Zbrog (front) pictured with assistant Erica Schultz.



Sales reps for the company also highlight Lambskin Specialties' wide range of cleaning products at cost-effective prices.

"There are price points for virtually everything we offer, to meet various needs, without sacrificing a whole lot in quality," Schultz said. "We offer a deep line, so our sales representatives can go to a distributor and say, 'This is why you should be buying from my vendor.'

"When you have a team of sales representatives who are carrying a solid line card, they can develop strong relationships with distributors. They can go in with confidence and say, 'You know about me and my lines, you should therefore know that when I'm showing you products from Lambskin Specialties, I'm showing you the best.'"

Schultz added that it's important for a manufacturer to support independent sales reps by providing them with the information that they need to sell. Lambskin Specialties also does a lot with national advertising to make sure that its name is prominent. This helps reinforce the general message that independent sales reps are trying to deliver about the company.

The Canadian manufacturer also uses education and training to get its message across to both independent sales reps and distributors.

"We want to allow our distributors to sell more products, and we want their customers to be happy with the products. Ultimately, we want to be accomplishing a greater level of sales for ourselves, which goes without saying," Schultz said. "Starting with our independent sales reps, we make sure that they are aware of the intended use of each product, and we provide them with information on our products that they can share with distributors."

To help with this educational process, Lambskin Specialties provides a section on its Web site entitled "Dusting 101," which gives a breakdown on different types of dusters and offers advice on which duster is the best for a particular application.

"It's possible for everyone to get that information, all they have to do is look at our Web site," Schultz said. "Also, if distributors call us looking for a particular product, we will answer their questions to help direct them. We won't sell them something that is not going to be applicable to their needs.

"This isn't rocket science. It's pretty basic. We get the information to the proper channels



Khan Trang (front) with Chuyen Tran (left) and Chi Hoang, sewing wash pads.



The creative talents of Marketing Assistant Jey-Son Edwards can be seen in many of Lambskin Specialties' sales materials.

and follow it up with the products that are required."

Although selling cleaning products may not be rocket science, Schultz said he does understand how distributors can become overwhelmed with all of the various products and services available to them in today's competitive jan/san marketplace.

He added that he sometimes wonders how a DSR can actually carry on his job.

"They have a book on thousands of products with different subtleties. There are all kinds of chemicals, soaps, machinery, mops, brooms, brushes, window products and mats. You can go on and on. And then they have people like us selling them dusters, telling them to use this duster or that one. It almost seems trite to be concerned with a different type of duster," Schultz said.

To help combat this, officials at Lambskin Specialties provides DSRs with information through a catalog and Web site that they can easily use.

"We also try to provide as much information to our independent sales representatives as possible so that if a DSR has a question, it can be answered quickly," Schultz said.

He added that it's equally important to have independent sales reps available for an occasional sales meeting with these DSRs, in some cases providing them with samples of a particular product.

Reliability also plays an important role in reaching out to DSRs. Schultz said the last thing a DSR or purchasing agent needs to worry

about is whether products from a manufacturer are going to arrive on time.

“We really strive to A.) Move the product out quickly; and, B.) Avoid back orders. We also provide quick tracking of goods to find out when they were shipped out. If something doesn’t arrive on time, we can help the distributor to locate that particular item.”

A Changing Landscape

Despite the fact that the jan/san marketplace continues to evolve, Schultz said the basic need of distributors has remained the same. They continue to need quality goods coming from quality vendors.

“I do think, however, that the general business landscape of distribution has changed dramatically. I’m sure (many distributors) are struggling to work within these changes. You don’t have to look much further than the ISSA (International Sanitary Supply Association) to realize that our industry is different from the past,” Schultz said. “But in terms of distributors’ true needs, I think they have remained the same. There are certainly more demands placed on distributors, and in turn, they have to place more demands on us as manufacturers.”

Among the changes that Schultz spoke about are the two forms of consolidation that have taken place in the world of jan/san during the past 10-plus years. He said the first form of consolidation is when one company, such as a distributorship or manufacturer, buys another distributorship or manufacturer. The other form is called “purchasing consolidation,” where distributors are looking to package their purchasing with as few vendors involved as possible.

Schultz said it’s hard to gauge what kind of end-result either type of consolidation has placed on a company such as his.

“On one hand, consolidation reduces the number of distributors that you have to attract, so rather than selling to 10 distributors you are selling to 1. In some ways, this makes it easier on us,” Schultz said. “On the other hand, there

is a potential that if your customer gets swallowed up by somebody that is not your customer, then you have your work cut out for you.”

He added that there are also interesting implications regarding the manufacturing side of company buyouts. Consolidation of the manufacturing sector can mean that there are fewer

bundle product categories together,” Schultz said. “We have to be attentive to this without diluting what we do best, and without losing our identity.”

Such changes keep manufacturers such as Lambskin Specialties on their toes.

“Business is constantly changing. We just produced our 2004 price list, and in some ways, it’s already out of date. This is where Web sites come into play. They can be very flexible in how you deal with such changes.”

When asked if Lambskin Specialties sells to a niche market within the cleaning industry, Schultz said his view on the subject is changing.

“In some ways, we have often thought of ourselves as offering a niche product with our duster line. In reality, however, dusters are one of the most common products available,” Schultz said. “When I walk through a hotel, airport or office building, I notice that on virtually every cleaning cart there is a duster of some form. It’s one of those necessary staple products.

“It’s a product that virtually every jan/san distributor is either currently offering, or if not, should be offering. Everybody has dust and wants to get rid of that dust in some way or another.”



Maria Feiden (front) and Helena Gowka work together on the brushing line.



Tailor John Gorbay creates a custom made shearling coat for a customer.



From left, Doan Nguyen, Duc Nguyen, Darren Wesley and Dung Dinh work closely together in the factory.



Thanh Nguyen is responsible for selecting the skins for production.

competitors to struggle with for those left in the industry. On the other hand, the manufacturers that are left are now much bigger, and some may have not been a competitor prior to the consolidation.

Consolidation among manufacturers can also bring with it conflicts with independent sales representatives, as they may suddenly find themselves representing competing clients.

In terms of distributors looking to consolidate their purchasing, Schultz said this move forces manufacturers to be more attentive to the overall needs of their distributor customers.

“At one time we were the wool duster vendor, but a distributor is not looking for a wool duster vendor anymore. He is looking for a dust control vendor, which encompasses many different products. The distributor may want to

Four Reasons For Success

With the start of 2004, Schultz said he feels positive about what the future holds for his company.

“Overall, we live in interesting times, both economically, politically and socially. Hopefully, the overall economy will improve in the coming months so that operating a business will perhaps be easier, or at least, won’t get much tougher.”

In looking back, Schultz credits four specific reasons why Lambskin Specialties has prospered during its past 35-plus years in the cleaning industry.

“First, there is our belief in putting the customer first. That is what drives us,” Schultz said. “Secondly, it’s important to

remember the ingenuity and commitment of our staff. A lot of the things that we, as a company, have been able to accomplish can be attributed to our staff figuring out how to solve various problems.

"We have good employees who understand our products and are versatile. They can figure out ways to do things. We couldn't do much without our employees."

Thirdly, Schultz credits his company's independent sales reps over the years as being critical to the success of Lambskin Specialties while in the cleaning industry.

"If it wasn't for their commitment we certainly wouldn't be able to do many things. There have been several people who really paved the way for us," he said. "The late Irv Goldstein was our very first representative and was instrumental in putting together a sales team over 30 years ago. Mark Reimers signed on with Irv at the beginning and was a great asset. Reimers & Associates, Inc., (of Englewood, CO) is still one of our representatives."

Schultz also credits the late Oscar Koepel, a well-known cleaning and training expert, along with the late Ray Tobin, who started *Maintenance Sales News*, for helping his company with its early sales efforts.

"Oscar Koepel introduced us to Dick Friedman (of the Chicago-based RTF Group) who has represented us for 18 or more years. The RTF Group has been a very important part of our sales team," Schultz said. "Another key company has been Wind Associates, of Burien, WA. These are among the most professional sales organizations in our industry.

"We couldn't do half of what we currently do without our sales team being out there. These are smart people. They know where to locate the markets and business. You take men like Bob McClung (Southern California) and Tom Kolterman (of NorthStar Sales, in Southampton, PA) who have such incredible product knowledge, combined with extraordinary heart. There are examples of this throughout the United States; we are very lucky. There is a very strong communication process going on between all of our players, looking for how to secure and support particular business."

Schultz credits his father's (Albert Schultz) entrepreneurial spirit as being Lambskin Specialties' fourth main reason for succeeding in the jan/san industry.

"His entrepreneurship is certainly the propellant for what we are doing today. My dad would get out on the road, introducing and selling products that weren't known at that time in the janitorial industry," he said. "I

reflect upon my first sales trip about 34 years ago. I was 8 years old at the time and my brother was 10. My dad took us on a sales expedition through the Upper Midwest of the United States, calling on prospects through Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

"It was just a tremendous experience. We saw so many different things, and my father sold a lot of accounts. One that sticks out in my mind is Brissman-Kennedy. The company is one of the largest distributorships in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and has been buying from us ever since."

Although many relationships have stayed the same for Lambskin Specialties over the years, the company has experienced changes. One such change is how it markets products and services to the cleaning marketplace.

"Ways in which we are marketing now weren't even thought of 5 to 10 years ago. That is how fast things have changed. You can constantly switch material on your Web site now, whereas five years ago you wouldn't necessarily have a Web site in operation," Schultz said.

Communication through e-mail is also an important part of business. Schultz said sales can be initiated within minutes by e-mail compared to days or weeks by other means.

"There is just so much you can do now electronically. The up side of this is being able to service people very quickly, and you can easily develop international relationships or develop real niche business," he said. "The down side is the tendency to forget how to deal one-on-one and develop relationships with people."

Schultz said that although it's important to not forget how to build relationships, he feels technology is a wheel that can't really be stopped.

Concerning Lambskin Specialties' own Web site for the cleaning industry, www.lambskin.com, Schultz said it's designed strictly for educational purposes. This is to help distributors, independent sales reps and end-users alike.

"We do not try to sell products on this site; it would just be too confusing for all involved," Schultz said. "Distributors are the ones actively selling, and a number of them offer Web sites where they sell direct. That is their strength."

(Lambskin Specialties does offer its apparel and accessory products from its online boutique, The Wonderful World Of Sheepskin, located at www.worldofsheepskin.com.)

In further explaining his company's busi-

ness philosophy, Schultz added: "Helping distributor customers prosper is one of the major priorities of Lambskin Specialties. This means producing quality, cost effective and innovative products as well as broadening the mix of these products.

"These are pretty simple goals, but when it comes down to it, these are the staples of what business is all about."

Keeping Relationships Strong Is Vital For Jan/San Distribution Chain

Maintaining a healthy North American manufacturing base requires the coordinated help of many different players. In the cleaning industry, this means a strong relationship must be built and maintained between manufacturers, independent sales reps, distributors and end-users, according to Schultz.

"There has been a lot of talk about the ISSA introducing end-users into the fold, and what that is doing to the relationship between manufacturers and distributors. People are asking, 'Will this move destroy that relationship, and where do independent reps fit in?'" Schultz said. "My observation is that the relationship between all four members of this industry is highly significant and synergistic. While some might feel threatened with the introduction of more end-users, we must nurture a better understanding about what each group brings to the table and expand on these strengths.

"We all have our roles to play. Each one of these roles should be respected and allowed to flourish."

Schultz added that he feels distributors should be working through independent sales reps for strong vendors, and particularly manufacturers, as it's important to not lose sight of the fact that manufacturing in North America is a very significant activity.

"Don't worry that we (manufacturers) are trying to go direct to end-users at every opportunity because it's just not efficient for us to do so," Schultz said. "I feel I'm speaking for most vendors in that we cherish our relationships with distributors. As a manufacturer, you are lucky when you develop such good relationships. We know we can depend on distributors and that they can depend on us. That is our greatest reward."

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