

Fibers & Filaments Report

The September/October, 2005 issue of Brushware Magazine included an article written by Bob Lawrence titled Fibers & Filaments Report. The following excerpts are from an interview with Richard Sheerr, President, The Wagman Primus Group, LP, for that article and is reprinted with permission from Brushware Magazine and Bob Lawrence.

North America is Wagman Primus' biggest marketplace for the company's paint applicators and sundries, but Richard Sheerr expects that "in a couple of years, there will be a balance between North American sales and non-North American sales." Europe and Asia are also strong markets for the company which is also now selling in Africa, according to Sheerr.

"What differentiates Wagman Primus is that we are first and foremost a service business," says Sheerr. "We are in the business of sourcing quality factories, assuring that those factories meet the specifications that our customers want, dealing with financial issues, financing the working capital and warehousing. We have two warehouses in China and we ship from there on demand. It's that model that differentiates us. That and knowing a lot about different factories, who to buy from and who to avoid." Additionally, a result of a new partnership between Wagman Primus and Tim Kleingeld, former head of the bristle division at Delbanco Meyer in London, Sheerr says the company has "a much broader scope in China, and we have more access to more factories because we are selling very different types of products depending on what part of the world you are in."

"Certainly over the last year or two there has been significant inflation in steel and anything oil based – filaments and polypropylene for paint brush handles, etc.," Sheerr says. "My view is that they are basically available but prices are up significantly. Sometimes Wagman Primus passes it on, sometimes we absorb it and sometimes we negotiate with the factories and make it go away."

Sheerr says, "the major issue with hog bristle is the coming of crossbred pigs to China and the reduction in the long bristle. To get three inch bristle, the pig has to live three or four years, but with crossbreeds, they slaughter them in eight or nine months, meaning they're all going to be short haired pigs, which is, by the way, what we have in the U.S." However, as a global trader with an opportunity to sell a lot more short, he can be pickier about which factories he does business with. "As a result, I can focus on the better factories and negotiate for better prices, which has already been borne out to me in the months since we made the deal (resulting in Wagman Primus becoming a global trader). "It gives me greater buying power, which always puts you in a stronger position when doing business with the Chinese."

"Yes, China is a competitor, but it is also our primary source," Sheerr says.
"Some of our strongest competitors are factories who bill directly to manufacturers."

"I think it's an increasingly competitive time," says Sheerr, "and I think all people in the assembly business, including paint applicators, are threatened by China. So the real question is how are they going to react? What's their strategy going to be to continue to thrive? I'm not going to opine on what's going to happen in five years, but my answer to that has been, Number One, to expand geographically, and Number Two, to go outside the paint applicator area and into the industrial brush area, and that's something we've been doing for just about a year, and Number Three, we have a human hair business and we are expanding our effort to process human hair for hair extensions and other hair pieces."