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Janus International Corp.

Amy Campbell
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Janus - Roman god of passage, of doorways (januae), archways (jani), and of beginnings and endings.

When searching for a name for his new company, David Curtis knew he wanted something different. "I wanted a name that meant something, a word that was translatable into every language," he recalls. He stumbled upon the name Janus, a mythological figure often depicted with two heads—one looking to the past, the other to the future. Janus, the god of doorways and new beginnings, was the perfect symbol for Curtis' new business venture on many levels.



It was a new beginning for Curtis, who, in 1989, founded Doors & Building Components Inc. (DBCI), an Atlanta-based manufacturer of roll-up doors. Although he sold the company in 1995, he stayed on as president until 2000. A two-year non-compete clause kept him from moving forward with a new company. When the clause expired in January 2002, Janus International Corp. opened its doors with a new product and a fresh outlook.

An Innovative Design

"I considered all the problems I knew that existed in the industry and tried to solve them with the new door," Curtis says. That includes damage done during transit, springs that rusted or failed, and lengthy, difficult installation times. What Curtis came up with is a design that incorporates the traditional look of the roll-up door but with a myriad of new features that addresses these problems.



The Model 650 uses the basic dead-axle design but with a few modifications. Rather than using one spring, Janus' door features a two-spring system, one on each side of the door. "That keeps the spring energy balanced across the width of the door so it won't pull to one side or the other," Curtis says. The springs are also pre-assembled on the door and are pre-lubed. This saves on installation time and money in the field, Curtis says. "Plus, you get a product that's made exactly the same way every time." This is especially important when the person installing the door is not always an expert.

Nonlubricated springs can lead to rust, which in turn, leads to spring failure. The dead axle allows the springs to be enclosed inside the door so they are not exposed to the elements. "This new door is going to be fast and easy to install," says Daniel Curtis, David's father and vice president of sales for Janus. "The operation of the doors is so much smoother," he adds.

Curtis also focused on reducing door damage during shipping. "That was a problem that plagued us, that plagued everybody," he says. A solid torque tube and a new tensioning system eliminate drum-wheel dents. "By having the dead-axle design, we're able to pre-install the springs, support brackets and the tension wheel. Because of that, we're able to use the brackets to suspend the doors on a skid, which keeps them from touching each other. The skid itself is what the truck driver puts the straps over," Curtis says. "We're shipping doors up to 1,500 miles from the plant and we're not seeing any damage, so we're real encouraged about the new packaging."

In an effort to protect his innovations, Curtis has four patents pending. "Instead of copying the other products, David has concentrated on innovations and creating a better design," Daniel Curtis says.

Looking to the Future

Janus set up headquarters in Temple, Ga., about 40 miles outside Atlanta. The company currently employs about 75 employees. "We're growing at a very rapid pace," Curtis says. "The customer acceptance of the new product has been very good." He has also assembled a team of well-known industry experts. "With the people on our team, we have probably more than 200 years of self-storage experience," Daniel Curtis says. "The company is not one person. The company is the sum of the talents of all the people." Curtis also gives much credit to his employees. "I'm good at inventing and I'm good at being a team leader, but I try to surround myself with people who can balance out my weaknesses."

Curtis hopes the combined expertise of his team will lead to rapid expansion, including internationally. While running DBCI, he continually worked the European market. "It was a real goal of mine to have—and maintain—a leadership status in Europe like we had in the United States," he recalls. He's hoping to do the same with Janus, and has already made some inroads. "I believe we will be successful because I'm dedicated to it," he says.



He's also counting on the new packaging concept to give Janus an edge over the competition. "We can get the stuff there and not have it be damaged. And we have the technical know-how to do a proper take-off on the job and get the materials to the jobsite," he says. Getting all the supplies needed—at a low cost—is a big frustration in European markets, Curtis says. "They get a shipment and it's wrong. Then they're seven weeks away from getting more stuff. People want to have that feeling of trust, that you know what you're doing, that you're going to take care of them and do a good job."

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Curtis believes the pre-assembled door design will be attractive to the European market. "It's going to be a lot less expensive for these developers to install our products," he says. "In Europe, labor is very high in all the countries. If we can speed up the installation by half, we're saving them money and time."



In addition to shipping doors all over the United States, Janus already has footholds in Canada, Central and South America and Puerto Rico. Curtis hopes to further advance the company's European market by displaying a working model at Inside Self-Storage's London Expo in November.

One or two more operating plants in the United States, including one on the West Coast within the next year, are also on the horizon. "The self-storage business is continually evolving," Curtis says. "I try to evolve with it, to recognize the patterns and take advantage of them. I try to be a leader and not a follower."

For more information, contact Janus International Corp., 134 East Luke Road, Temple, GA 30179; phone 770.562.2850; www.janusintl.com.

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