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MANUFACTURERS CORNER

THE GENIE COMPANY... ...Wish Granted!

In August, I drove to Mt. Hope, Ohio, to visit The Genie Company and interview Mike Kridel, the company's president since January, 2011. In addition to Mike, Rick Johnson, Director of Operations, and David Osso, Marketing Manager, provided input and a tour of the company's manufacturing facilities located in Baltic, Ohio. It was an enlightening experience and one that I believe will be of interest to the readers of *International Door & Operator Industry*.

Many in our industry know Mike from his eight years with Wayne-Dalton, but for those who do not, he possesses an extensive and impressive background. Prior to being elevated to President of Genie by Dennis Stone, President and CEO of the Overhead Door Corporation, Mike was Executive Vice President of Operations, Engineering and Supply Chain for Wayne-Dalton. He also served in various leadership positions with the General Electric Company for 18 years. One thing is certain, he is quite confident in Genie, its people, products and future.

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"Quality is our first name, Customer Service is our middle name, and Genie is our last name."



The Genie name is well known within the industry, and is a highly recognized icon among homeowners and builders...it has been so since 1954. Without question, Genie is one of America's most recognized brands. When I asked about the reason for the firm's success, I was provided with three:

- Commitment to its loyal and growing dealer base
- Commitment to bring to the market newly designed products with high quality standards
- Commitment to have effective and passionate people running the business

As Mike stated, "Being the Genie Company, there is an implied guarantee that when a dealer or consumer makes a request or 'wish', their wish is granted. After all, isn't that what a Genie does?"

Door and access systems dealers are a critical and vital part of their business.

The company's most recent product launch was a complete new line of operators under the Genie Commercial Line banner. This is notable since Genie has not previously marketed its well-known brand in the commercial or industrial markets. "We're very excited to see the impact it is making," stated Mike. It was highlighted that the company has an extensive offering of models along with exclusive features such as Multi-Volt™ Setting which allows the voltage of either single-phase or three-phase to be selected on the job site during installation.

As for what's new, Mike informed me that Genie just launched its *Intelligent Wall Console*, which allows

dealers to input their name and contact information. I witnessed a demonstration of this feature and it was quite impressive. One might consider the console as the electronic version of the traditional dealer identification sticker, without the fading or peeling.

Another unique offering coming soon will be their new Battery Back-Up. This new and very strong battery will perform in the event a power outage is experienced by a homeowner. The unit can be purchased at the time of the original purchase or added later. This makes it more convenient for the homeowner and offers Genie dealers plenty of after-market sales opportunities.

I inquired about the importance of dealers to Genie and was told that door and access systems dealers are a critical and vital part of their business.

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"Whether they sell and install the product direct, or provide installation service for our retailers, they carry the lion's share of our business to American garages everywhere," asserted Mike. He also noted that Genie dealers have the opportunity to provide service work as needed for older units since the company has literally millions of units in operation throughout the country.

Speaking of dealers, I was totally impressed with the company's "Adopt a Dealer" program. A number of Genie employees from various departments are assigned two dealers to periodically call and 'visit'. What a great idea and personal touch! The employees are asked to report the content of their visits to Mike...especially if the conversations uncover any concerning issues. And, as Mike noted emphatically, "I read every single one of those reports." Keeping close to their customers is a high priority as dramatically illustrated with this program... estimated to be several thousand calls made annually to dealers by Genie employees.

One means of dealer support provided by Genie is via their website and Dealer Locator feature. The site receives thousands of hits each month providing qualified leads to dealers for new sales of operators and accessories or for service work. "It's a very valuable tool that we build traffic for through search engine optimization efforts, and our social sites including Facebook and Twitter," stated David. "In addition, our three national call centers get calls every day from the millions of homeowners that have older Genie units that need service or replacement – we verbally provide these homeowners with names of loyal Genie dealers in their area," he added.

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We spent some time discussing the economy and how the global marketplace is impacting both manufacturers and dealers. I learned that even though the builder market has suffered, Genie has seen some gains in the remodeling market to offset those losses. "We feel fortunate we were able to launch our new line of openers in 2010, which has many competitive features that allow us to differentiate ourselves in a tight market," stated Mike.

The company has made a substantial investment to create in new designs for its openers, and not just an overhaul of existing models. For instance, switching the motor platform for its main screw drive, belt, and chain models from AC to a powerful, super-duty 140V DC has allowed Genie to offer more features and differentiation from its competitors. Mike stated, "As a result of this investment, we have aggressively gone to the market place to build share with existing dealers and retailers, and to revisit those who have decided to give us a fresh look."

Many manufacturers provide significant humanitarian efforts and Genie certainly is no exception. The company has a committee of employees that annually choose certain charities to support. Already in 2012, the company has raised awareness and money for Child Abuse Awareness, and sponsored a Relay for Life cancer awareness 5K run. Additional fund raising activities and charitable donations for the remainder of the year will include providing needed items for the Share-A-Christmas Foundation, as well as supporting the Akron Children's Hospital.

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Everyone is concerned about the future, and what will specifically occur in our industry. Mike shared his thoughts, "It is going to remain a tough economy and the best everyone can do is keep improving. Many of the better companies have already reduced their inefficiencies to remain competitive and are focused on quality and customer service improvements along with product differentiation. Genie continues to move forward in all of these areas with the goal of developing closely aligned business and personal relationships with our dealer partners," he added.

A continued emphasis has been placed on the fact that Genie has been an iconic brand for a number of years. Many dealers have grown with Genie and stood with them during the good times and the challenging times. "We have made a huge commitment to research, develop, test, and produce the next generation of Genie openers," shared Mike. "These products not only feature great items for both the consumer in terms of performance, safety, security and convenience, but for dealers in the form of easy installation, programming, and even streamlining inventory management," he added.

Who is Genie now? "Quality is our first name, Customer Service is our middle name, and Genie is our last name," stated Mike.



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