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PROCON builds Rand-Whitney's new 45,000 s/f expansion

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Shown (from left) are: Ted Fire, The Kraft Group; Matt Wirth, PROCON; Joel Witham, PROCON; Sam Ramaker, PROCON; Justin Ritz, PROCON; Mark Stebbins, CEO/chairman, PROCON; Michael Hebert, PROCON; Dan Messier, PROCON; and Nick Smith, president, Rand-Whitney.

Worcester, MA "As I understand it, multiple generations of employees power up this place. The workforce of people is really the biggest asset that this commonwealth has had, and always will have," said Mass. lieutenant governor Karyn Polito at the September 12 ribbon cutting of Rand-Whitney Worcester's 45,000 s/f expansion event. Company president Nick Smith was joined by leadership, dignitaries, valued customers and a group of employees in the celebration at their One Agrand St. headquarters. Rand-Whitney is owned by The Kraft Group, owners of the New England Patriots. PROCON was the designer and construction manager for the project.

Among the attendees were The Kraft Group leadership that included the founder chairman and CEO Robert Kraft, as well as Jonathan and Daniel Kraft the president and international presidents' respectively. Worcester city manager Edward Augustus, city councilor George Russell and PROCON's chairman and CEO Mark Stebbins.

Robert Kraft talked about his deep roots in Worcester going back to the 1960s and his affection for the city over the years. "We are honored to be able to grow and expand here. This is a function of the people working with us - a great management team and employees. Worcester is very important to us as a vibrant community of people who care and do the right thing. So it's our honor to be here and thank everyone that has been a part of this."

The 45,000 s/f addition included new equipment and capabilities, much-needed storage space, a state-of-the-art waste extraction system, 22 dock doors, a shipping/receiving office area, truck storage areas, a dedicated truck-access driveway, increased trailer storage and redeveloped on-site parking.

In addition to adding a warehouse to the site, the company upgraded the look of the overall campus. Therefore, after completing the warehouse, the team began work on improvements to the adjacent

building that houses graphic design for Rand-Whitney located at 207 Greenwood St. The building's façade received a facelift with renovated windows, LED lighting and a new exterior paneling system painted in Rand-Whitney blue.

Next, the headquarters building received a complete makeover with efficient store-front windows and a composite/insulated metal panel combo. Offices, common areas and conference rooms were also updated along with new stand-up desks for the staff, also finished in the company's signature color. Lastly, the main lobby was refurbished with modern interior finishes in keeping with the company's branding. Besides adding 45,000 s/f of space, overall improvements produced an updated and consistent design across the campus. The increased plant infrastructure will also give them the ability to purchase more capital equipment, maximize their production and grow their capabilities and offering, which is a win-win for their employees and customers.

The current facility was built in 1965, and according to Nick Smith "The market has changed substantially in the last twenty years with a mass exodus of a lot of major segments of manufacturing in the Northeast. Today, there are 50 fewer plants than 25 years ago." Such changes prompted the family-owned business to expand and renovate to remain competitive in the manufacturing market.

It was a complex project requiring the construction team to work around the daily operations of the existing facility. "It was really close quarters that took a lot of work on everybody's part. I want to thank my PROCON design and construction team who has been down here working shoulder to shoulder with Nick and his team to get it done. I think the people that work here must be incredibly proud to come to work at such an amazing building. It has come into the modern times, and is a much more efficient and productive facility" said Mark Stebbins.

Rand-Whitney is one of several companies owned by New England Patriots' owner Robert Kraft. As such, it is the largest independent corrugated packaging manufacturer in New England with areas of expertise in cost-saving package re-engineering and custom lean manufacturing programs. The company also produces and ships corrugated displays, shipping containers and folding cartons to a variety of industrial and consumer end-users. The Worcester headquarters is their third warehouse collaboration with PROCON, who previously partnered with them on facilities in Dover, N.H., and Pawtucket, R.I.

Jonathan Kraft said "We have a saying in our family that Worcester is a great place to be. We have been dying to invest real capital at this location and are so appreciative of the city leadership that has allowed this to happen."

The ribbon-cutting celebration concluded with a tour of the facility, an employee group photo and a catered barbeque luncheon for the Rand-Whitney workforce. Edward Augustus summed up the sentiments of the morning saying "We may do a lot of good work in Worcester, but we don't forget that many great people in this city come to work at manufacturing enterprises like Rand-Whitney, earn a good paycheck, raise their family, pay their taxes and contribute to their community. And these are the kinds of projects that make everything else possible."

