


[<< Home Page](#)

Current location :



Quick Search

[Magazine Index](#)
[Features](#)
[Zones](#)
[Media Info](#)
[Site Info](#)

10:57:30 am - Mon, 10th May

### +++ Quick Links

[>> IT Buyers Guide](#)
[>> Bookmark This Page](#)
[>> Terms & Conditions](#)
[>> Privacy Policy](#)
[>> Security Statement](#)
[Click Here](#)


**Business Profiles**  
1107  
currently available  
to view now

[Click here](#)

**The Manufacturing**  
Database  
Research Centre  
Alliance

### + Interview

May 2004 16:11 - Source:

[Email Article](#)
[Print Article](#)

#### » Tech tactics



#### The Hayes Company's Glen Waisner talks to George Schultz about incorporating technology into overall business practices

High technology is probably not the first thing that comes to mind when you think about animal statuary and garden gnomes. But that's just what Glen Waisner, the new president of, The Hayes Company Inc., a Wichita, KS-based manufacturer of ornamental products, has had on his mind since stepping into his position less than one year ago. "A custom throughout my career has been driving technology into our businesses to affect performance or profitability, or whatever [goal] it is," he says.

"Technology is purely a tool. It's not interesting in and of itself, and I never sit down to pull machines

apart or try to create code. But," argues a man with a 20-year-career in the energy business and then broader industrial consulting, "there have always been instances where fundamental processes of the business could be improved with certain technologies." His immediate technology contribution to the Hayes Co. was inaugurating full-bore product lifecycle management (PLM), expressly to parley the organization's core strength-of-product into ambitious expansion. There was more to this, however, than simply adding a software application. Strong yet agile design, sourcing, marketing and organization needed to surround it. At that time Waisner had just become the first outsider to head the old but still family-owned Hayes firm. Fortunately, the family never was adverse to change for opportunity's sake. Originally established for 15 years as a lumber brokerage, The Hayes Co. emerged 25 years ago when the firm switched entirely into the manufacturing of wood fencing and associated products. Waisner received a degree in mechanical engineering from Case Western Reserve University, earned an MBA from John Carroll University, Cleveland, and pursued postgraduate studies at the Harvard Law School, there concentrating on negotiation. His early career in positions up to vice president was with Consolidated Natural Gas, a Fortune 200 energy company headquartered in Pittsburgh (later acquired by Dominion Resources, Richmond, VA.). He had served with other industrial consulting firms before establishing his own company.

But customer demand led into iron fencing, then into making iron items for the backyard. Hayes is almost entirely out of its wood origin but heavily into the mass market for lawn and garden decorative products, now also including resin-



**Expo: June 15-17, 2004**  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
New York, NY

based. Think Wal-Mart, Lowes, Home Depot and most of other chains, although they generally put their own private labels on Hayes products. The closely-held company does not disclose financial data, but says it fits into the mid-size manufacturer category. The fact of seven manufacturing facilities with roughly half its output from its own plant in Wichita speaks somewhat of a size to support its vast customer base.

So, it's an organization that already evolved its chosen product field, already successfully aligned with the big players in its market both the mass and the niche merchandisers. Where does new technology fit here in the Waisner scheme of things? "Given how central product development is, and how much we want to accelerate the commercialization of products, because our growth aspirations are fairly severe," says Waisner, "we had to do something to be able to increase the bandwidth of the entire organization to move product from concept to finalization. "That's what got us looking at organization, work processes, and technology," he explains. "We implemented changes in all three, and we did it simultaneously. We very much challenged the organization to view the changes we were making not as a technology' issue, but as a fundamental change in how we deal with product in the whole organization. Technology just happened to be an enabler."

And PLM became the key strategy as well as the software technology to support the new Hayes mode of accelerated product development, one that would generate three-year "libraries" of products to keep ahead of the market across multiple lines, diverse buyers and regional tastes. It helped the transition that Hayes for three years was a client of Waisner's Pittsburgh-based consulting company, Catalyst Consulting Partners LLC, for strategy, marketing, and organizational development. "So," notes Waisner, "there were really no surprises on either side of the aisle here when they approached me about joining them."

Once set, the pace of implementation was rapid, necessarily so because at that time in early 2003 Hayes already would be working toward the 2005 selling season of most major customers. Beyond strategizing of organization and internal processes, first came selection of a PLM system vendor through a very accelerated evaluation process. Among a final short list of three contenders, MatrixOne Inc. emerged as the choice based on its newest technology and recognized support services, according to Waisner.

The vendor faced an eight-week window, to synchronize Hayes' product development calendar to capture 2005 product season "concepts, designs, prototypes and everything that flows through it," in Waisner's words. He explains that launching on other than a model-year basis would have proved more complicated "and besides, we were trying to make a clean break from prior processes and prior systems." From vendor selection in May, the system was up and running in eight weeks, Waisner reports. The PLM concept basically helps manage all aspects, all stages of "product" from earliest concept through production (reflecting supplier and manufacturing dynamics) and into distribution and post-delivery services, even to ultimate disposition.

At Hayes, PLM marshals product and production data from, indeed, a distributed environment. It starts within a three-way design cadre: Hayes' internal designers who drive development of all products; secondly, its network of outside contract designers, and finally, production engineering aspects of design among Hayes' offshore contract manufacturers. Production of all product lines and styles, with a nod to all of Hayes' diverse merchandising customers, is centered at the primary Hayes plant in Wichita but also outsourced to facilities in Mexico, Canada and Asia, primarily China. Before adopting PLM, Hayes had used only its own internally developed systems for tracking products from concepts through finalization. "Multiple systems that didn't coordinate well with one another," says Waisner.

The PLM system now in place "affords us a host of advantages," he says, "some of which stem from automation, some from increased accountability because, by the nature of these systems, everything is tracked constantly: Who's done what to a product or process?" And Waisner stresses that this tracked knowledge provides more than a one-time benefit throughout continued product innovation "because the [same] opportunities keep circling back: Why did we

make this change in this particular product at this point in time?' Somebody needs to address that, and we'll know who that someone' is."

From yet another perspective, Waisner remarks, "There's never a dearth of product ideas, given our network of designers, given our experience, given the amount of time and effort that our sales folks expend being in the stores. Having an idea for the next product is not the problem. It's what to do we do when we have 45 new ideas for that next product. How do we keep track of it all, and how do we sift through to the most commercially viable product first? That's the proverbial product funnel' idea, and it's a process that this technology definitely aids.

[Back To Top](#)

 [Email Article](#)

 [Print Article](#)



All content on this website remains the property of Conquest Business Media Ltd.  
©Copyright 2004 all rights reserved