

**COMPANY PROFILE ///**

**CERAMATERIALS**



# ***DELIVERING ELITE SERVICE AND COST PERFORMANCE***

Multi-Tiered CFC Fixture with  
removable posts engineered  
by CeraMaterials. (Courtesy:  
CeraMaterials)

CeraMaterials is a global manufacturing, distribution, and engineering outfit specializing in high-temperature refractory materials including: CFC, graphite insulation, machined graphite, ceramic fiber, TZM, sintered ceramics, mineral wool, fire brick, and other common refractory materials, coatings, and accessories.

By **KENNETH CARTER**, Thermal Processing editor

**C**eraMaterials opened its doors 12 years ago, and during that time, has become a major player for the heat-treat industry. A key ingredient to that success can be reduced down to a simple concept: listening.

“What we try to do that I think a lot of companies miss, and it’s very basic, is actively listen,” said Jeff Opitz, president of CeraMaterials. “When a customer comes to us with a problem or a material request, we’re very intentional about understanding what our customer is asking for, and then rapidly responding with an appropriate solution.”

And that quick response time is crucial to CeraMaterials’ effectiveness and success as well.

“In many cases we’re dealing with a maintenance manager or production engineer who has equipment down” Opitz said. “In the heat-treating business, down time is toxic, so we work fast. Our shipping department is geared up to ship all the way until 4 p.m. same day, so if a customer calls us at 3:30 p.m. needing a few CFC threaded bolts for their vacuum furnace overnighted, we get it done.”

### EXTENSIVE PRODUCT RANGE

CeraMaterials offers a full range of products for vacuum and protective atmosphere environments.

“Speaking broadly, we offer any aftermarket component utilized in a moly or graphite hot zone — this ranges from insulation packages, to heating elements, to hearth rails and everything in between” he said. “We are also heavily involved with fixturing — the shelves or grids that hold the work. Because of its light weight, low thermal mass, and excellent resistance to distortion, CFC is an ideal material for fixturing — we’ve been busy assisting customers with conversions this year.”

CeraMaterials also has a wide range of products for atmosphere heat treaters and steel manufacturers, according to Opitz.

“We stock a myriad of refractory brick chemistries — ceramic blanket, ceramic paper, ceramic modules, ceramic fiber textiles, mortars, and castable mixes” he said. “Basically, any material or part inside a furnace, we’re supplying.”

### ONE-STOP SHOP

And in addition to its wide range of product offerings, CeraMaterials aims to be even more to its customers, according to Opitz.

“We want to be a company that a maintenance manager can call, a mechanical engineer can call, a procurement officer can call and source all the materials that they need for their operation from one place,” he said. “That’s why our tag line is ‘Your One-Stop Shop for Thermal Processing.’ We have a deep product line, and if something’s not listed on our website, chances are we can help provide it. Our customers love the fact they can come to us and buy everything they



CeraMaterials President Jeff Opitz holds a 2.5D Carbon/Carbon Grid. (Courtesy: CeraMaterials)

need rather than dealing with five or six separate companies. They either give us a phone call or come to our website, and everything they need is right there.”

Opitz stressed that CeraMaterials is extremely customer-centric.

“Our primary mission is providing service to our customers,” he said. “We make sure that when a call comes in, you’re not getting an automated system or voice prompt menu; a competent human answers the phone, and we strive for it to be on the very first ring. It’s kind of old school, but that’s important to us. When someone calls, we want them to interact directly with a member of our team who can get them answers immediately.”

That customer-centric philosophy doesn’t end with phone calls. It applies to all the ways a customer might reach out for assistance, according to Opitz.

“When RFQs come in via email, we acknowledge the receipt of



***“Because of our broad reach, we tend to have a good feel for what’s happening in the industry.”***



The recent construction of CeraMaterials’ new distribution facility in northeastern Pennsylvania gives the company 20,000 square feet of warehouse space and 5,000 square feet of office space. (Courtesy: CeraMaterials)

quote within five minutes and usually get the quote turned around in no more than 24 hours,” he said. “It’s about speed, service, and providing customers with an overall positive experience.”

## BUILDING ON EXPERIENCE

And yet another aspect of working closely with its customers is how CeraMaterials uses that knowledge to collectively collaborate, according to Opitz.

“Because of our broad reach, we tend to have a good feel for what’s happening in the industry,” he said. “We try to learn from our heat-treating community what the current trends are. Maybe in a pinch, instead of replacing an entire insulation board, we can get away with using some of our graphite moldable mix to get you up and running again. It’s just understanding what’s happening and getting customers out of jams. That’s what we’re all about.”

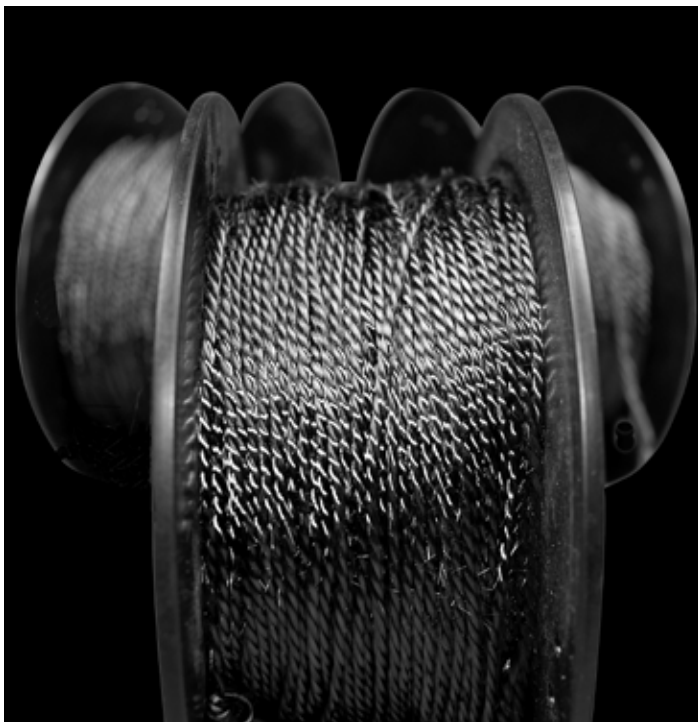
For the last several years, CeraMaterials has been developing its own line of graphite coatings and adhesives and treatments, according to Opitz.

“We used to source these products from different companies but were never thrilled with any of them, so we started making our own,” he said. “Seeing that product line developed — our EBS series of adhesives and coatings — has been rewarding. We’re steadily establishing ourselves in the market.”

## FROM SOURCING TO SELLING

CeraMaterials was founded by Dr. Jerry Weinstein, who was originally hired to consult with a company making body armor. The company, Ceradyne, was having difficulty sourcing some of the raw materials it needed, so it hired Weinstein to source the material.

Once Weinstein had found it, he convinced Ceradyne to allow him to sell the material outright instead of dealing with consulting



CeraMaterials new 24k tight weave carbon cordage offers superior tensile strength. (Courtesy: CeraMaterials)

fees. And Ceradyne agreed, according to Opitz.

“That was our first customer, our first order,” he said. “That’s how we kind of got up and running in the high-temp material game. And then from there, the growth was organic. We identified needs in the



Ceramic Fiber Blanket is available in varying grades, densities, and temperature ratings. (Courtesy: CeraMaterials)

marketplace and started offering what customers were asking for.”

### QUICK RISE TO SUCCESS

In 12 years, however, Opitz points out that CeraMaterials has become a major player.

“We have a diverse roster of high-profile “household-name” customers, government branches, national labs and universities, and have affiliations with most of the big names in the North American heat-treating world; it’s been a decade of growth,” he said.

A visible symbol of that growth can be seen in CeraMaterials’ recent construction of a new distribution facility in northeastern Pennsylvania, according to Opitz.

“We went from a relatively small space to now having 20,000 square feet of warehouse and 5,000 square feet of office space; it was a massive construction project,” he said. “It took us about two years from start to finish, but the facility is something I’m extremely proud of. It enables us to carry more inventory and fabricate more efficiently, both of which benefit our customers. We have an excel-

lent group of people here, from materials engineers to customer service reps to the shipping department. They’re happy working here because it’s a nice environment.”

CeraMaterials is certainly not content with even that recent expansion, and Opitz said he expects the company to grow as the industry does. Part of that growth will more than likely involve the virtual side of heat treat. The company is also looking into setting up a warehouse in Mexico or near the border that will allow CeraMaterials to serve that market as well.

And from a digital standpoint, CeraMaterials recently launched a completely revamped e-commerce website and is in the process of creating four additional websites that will focus on more specific niche categories, according to Opitz.

“It improves our SEO metrics,” he said. “With more hooks in the water, you’re going to catch more fish.” 🐟



**MORE INFO** [ceramaterials.com](http://ceramaterials.com)