

COMPANY PROFILE ///

W.H. KAY COMPANY

90 YEARS OF SERVING THE INDUSTRIAL HEAT-TREATING INDUSTRY

A car bottom
furnace in
stock at W.H.
Kay. (Courtesy:
W.H. Kay)

For almost a century, W.H. Kay Company has designed and sold new burner systems for industrial ovens and heat-treating furnaces.

By **KENNETH CARTER**, Thermal Processing editor

Consistency can be a crucial component in the world of industrial heat treating. That ability to stay reliable and proven is an important part of what's kept W.H. Kay Company supplying burner systems and controls for heat-treating furnaces to its customers for almost a century.

"This is our 90th year," said Michael Kay, president of W.H. Kay Company. "The company was started in 1936 representing Eclipse Combustion, which is a burner manufacturer. The company sold burners and furnaces in the 1940s to support the war effort."

REPRESENTING QUALITY MANUFACTURERS

With W.H. Kay Company entering its 10th decade, it's still going strong designing and selling burner systems, according to Kay. The company also buys, sells, and trades used industrial ovens and heat-treating furnaces and has more than 200 units in stock in its warehouse in Cleveland, Ohio.

"We've represented Eclipse for 90 years, and when Eclipse was bought by Honeywell, we now continue to represent Eclipse, Maxon, and Kromschroder," he said.

The wide variety of equipment W.H. Kay offers includes:

- » New aluminum drop bottom furnaces and horizontal aluminum quench furnaces (any size).
- » New walk-in ovens of any size – both gas-fired and electric.
- » New burner systems from Maxon, Eclipse, and Kromschroder.
- » Batch ovens.
- » Belt ovens.
- » Box furnaces.
- » Car-bottom furnaces.
- » Pit furnaces.
- » Aluminum drop bottom furnaces.
- » Vacuum Furnaces.
- » Atmosphere generators.

STAYING NEEDED

Going strong for 90 years means W.H. Kay has been able to both stay constant while changing with the times in order to stay relevant and needed by its customers, according to Kay.

"We try and be there with expertise and solutions for both OEMs and 'end-user' customers," he said. "We also buy and sell used heat-treat equipment, and test them out prior to shipping. We're basically manufacturer reps selling burner systems and controls."

W.H. Kay also specializes in aluminum heat treat, both drop-bottom furnaces and horizontal clench furnaces, but on top of what the company offers, it is vital that it be both visible and available when needed, according to Kay. "You have to know your customers and you have to treat people right; otherwise, they won't come back to you," he said. "We have a ton of repeat customers. When we sell something, they're coming back maybe in 10 years."

As with most things, each issue brought to W.H. Kay by its customers offers its own set of unique challenges, according to Kay.

WORKING WITH THE CUSTOMER

"Every issue is different, but they come to us for process heating solutions," he said. "For example, somebody may want to get into an oil quench line, and we will look around for one, or we might have one in stock, then we'll sell them the whole line if we have it available."

W.H. Kay is also experienced in converting electric furnaces to gas, according to Kay. "We can design a burner system that saves the customer a lot of money going from electric to gas firing," he said. "Converting from electric to gas will let a customer keep the same performance while saving them up to 60 percent. Even though the cost of fuel over the years has gone up and down for both electric and gas, gas is still more economical overall." Kay attributes multiple big sales through the years as major accomplishments, but the 90-year mark still remains the most special to the company and its employees. "Reaching 90 years in business is probably our biggest achievement, which is probably 0.00001 percent of companies that go 90 years," he said. "There are very few companies older than us."

SUCCESS FACTORS

Being respectful and courteous are just as important as expertise for this long-lived company, according to Kay. "It means just treating people right and knowing what you're doing and then standing behind it," he said. "That helps with repeat business. We've been doing jobs for some of the same companies for 60 years." W.H. Kay may not be as big as other heat-treat distributors, but its tenacity in the industry continues to make it viable, according to Kay.

"We have three sales guys, so we're not a big outfit, but we do have a 30,000-square-foot warehouse where we keep furnaces and ovens in stock for customers," he said.

THE NEXT PHASE

Having been successful for such a long time, Kay said he doesn't see much need to fix what's not broken as W.H. Kay continues into the future.

"You've got to keep in the flow of things, really; we haven't changed our selling philosophies or even what we're selling in 50 years," he said. "We're still selling furnaces, burners, valves, flame safety — everything that goes into a process heating system." 🔥

MORE INFO www.whkay.com



A horizontal aluminum quench furnace sold by W.H. Kay. (Courtesy: W.H. Kay)