

Manufacturing of EdenPURE heater reclaims jobs from overseas

Photos



Repository Stan Myers

Neil R. Tyburk, left, developer of the EdenPURE heater, with Eric B. Clark, center, and David Monte, both quality assurance managers with Suarez Corporation Industries, the marketing wing of the heater sales in the U.S..

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JACKSON TWP. — It took some American ingenuity, but local manufacturing is taking a portion of work formerly done in Asia.

The EdenPURE space heater — millions of them — all used to be made in Asia, said Ben Suarez, owner and founder of Suarez Corp. Industries. SCI markets and sells EdenPURE heaters, vacuum cleaners and water and air purifiers.

About six years ago, an entrepreneur brought his infrared heater to SCI. He was selling about 20,000 a year, but “the cost was so high it eliminated a lot of the public,” Suarez said.

“We signed on to be the exclusive marketer” but SCI doesn’t get involved in manufacturing, so it tried to reduce the cost by having the heater produced in Taiwan, Vietnam and China.

“We ended up selling about a million a year,” he said. “The problem was getting it here from China. When the weather gets cold, our sales spike,” and the company was unable to respond fast enough.

HEATER MAKEOVER

Mike Giorgio, controller and general manger at SCI, said it was hard to gauge demand and inventory needs.

“I had been looking for about six months for someone who would be willing to manufacture in the United States,” he said.

Then an associate at SCI came up with engineers Neil Tyburk, who has LT Enterprises, and Pat Nolan, who has Prime Engineered Plastics Corp.

“They said, ‘Sure, we can do it,’ ” Giorgio said

The entrepreneurs re-engineered the heater so it would be affordable to make here.

“It actually performed better than the China model,” Suarez said.

With parts being produced by four Stark County companies and four or five more in Northeast Ohio, the product created 78 new jobs locally, and 82 were strengthened because there was more work to be done, Suarez said.

2,000 A WEEK

Sylvania designed and produces the quartz infrared bulbs that go into the heaters, and production is at O’Brien Packaging on Whipple Avenue NW. Giorgio said the packaging is environmentally

friendly — no plastic foam is used, and the cardboard is produced locally.

Production here is at about 2,000 a week.

“We’re kind of taking it slow because we want to maintain the quality,” Giorgio said. “We can ramp that up pretty aggressively, if we want to.”

With the heater in 17,000 independent hardware stores and EdenPURE stores across the country, there’s a potential to sell a million of the Stark-made products a season, Suarez said.

“We’re not going to totally drop our China affiliates” for heaters, he said. Politics are politics, since Asian contractors also make other EdenPURE appliances, he said.

But the company is looking at the project as a triumph and a trend breaker — finding a way to bring manufacturing jobs back to the U.S. from overseas.

“The economy was tanking, and we were bringing work in,” Giorgio said.