

Made in the Mid-Willamette Valley: Specialty Polymers, Inc.

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Company name: Specialty Polymers, Inc.

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Business description: Manufacturer of environmentally friendly water-based polymers for paints, wood coatings, inks, concrete and wood glues. Our products make the paint stay on your wall, the water bead up on your deck and your glue stick. With production facilities on both the West Coast and East Coast, our products are shipped throughout North America, as well as into South America and Australia.

Employees: Total of 84; the Woodburn location employs 44 and we have an additional 40 employees who work at our plant in Chester, South Carolina.

Business specialties: We make water-based polymers for a wide range of applications. As the demand for more environmentally friendly paints and coatings has grown, Specialty has expanded our product line to meet this demand. Today, we offer more than 250 products to our customers.

Business history: Specialty Polymers' roots date to 1969, when founder Ray Southwell started our company with a goal to provide high quality, innovative products to the coatings industry. We are still owned by the Southwell family. Ray's daughter, Sheryl, is the president and his son, Jeff, is vice president. In 2004, Ray was inducted into the Oregon State University Engineering Hall of Fame in recognition of his lifetime accomplishments in polymer chemistry.

What is biggest advantage of doing business in the Mid-Willamette Valley: The great work force! The skills and work ethic of our employees here have helped to make Specialty Polymers successful. We also are ideally located along the I-5 corridor, providing easy access to the entire West Coast, as well as western Canada.

Essential business philosophy: Treat people like you want to be treated - customers, suppliers and employees.

Best way to stay competitive: Be responsive, flexible and innovative - do things for our customers that our competitors don't do. We compete against the largest chemical companies in the world, including Dow and BASF. To win our customer's business, we need to provide



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Specialty Polymers manufactures water-based polymers for paints, wood coatings, inks, concrete and wood glues.

SEDCOR, the lead economic development agency for Marion and Polk counties, is pleased to offer you a glimpse of the multitude of products and services being manufactured and provided by local area companies. SEDCOR's membership is composed of more than 500 business and community leaders who support our mission to enhance and diversify the economy of the Mid-Willamette Valley.

them something our much bigger competitors can't - or won't - provide. Specialty listens to what their customer's want, develops customized solutions, and then delivers. We pride ourselves on being responsive to our customer's needs.

What is most challenging in work: Over the past three years the economy has been the biggest challenge. Our business is tied to construction and as residential and commercial construction struggled, we had to make some extremely tough adjustments. We have also experienced challenges with our raw material supplies over the past 6 months - both shortages and price volatility.

Best business decision: In 2007, we focused on expanding both our product line and our sales force. We maintained this focus through the recession, and it is what's driving our current growth.

Toughest business decision: Reducing staff in 2007 and 2008 in response to the slowdown in business. It is tough to have to let good, long-term employees go.

What trends do you see happening in your industry: There continues to be a move towards more environmentally friendly coatings and adhesives, which provide additional opportunities for Specialty. There has been a lot of consolidation throughout the industry; not just with our customers, but also with our suppliers and competitors. This opens up the door for us, as a smaller company we can have closer relationships with our customers and work to provide them the exact product they need.

Major clients: Miller Paint, The Sherwin-Williams Company, Willamette Valley Company, Vaspar, and Jeld-Wen

For additional information, contact SEDCOR at (503) 584-7303 or e-mail sappleby@sedcor.com.