



SUPPLIER PROFILE

Omega Lift Manufacturing Relies On Customer Ideas



Antonio Pannia, Omega Lift Manufacturing, Bolton, Ontario
By Karen Crowley

Use a forklift? Omega Lift Manufacturing, Inc., would like to have a word with you.

The Ontario-based forklift manufacturer gets many of its ideas by speaking to customers, said Operations Manager Greg Pannia. The company visits auto recycling facilities and trade shows to get customers' opinions.

"When a customer suggests something, we actually listen," Pannia said. "I design the machines; I'm not the one using them. You've got to listen to the person who drives them, the person who repairs them. If you listen to the people who use it day in and day out, you can design the equipment better."

Located north of Toronto, the company was founded 27 years ago by Pannia's father, Antonio Pannia, who ran a similar business in Italy. He immigrated to Canada in the 1970s, "and he continued what he knew best," Pannia said. The business was originally called Pannia Brothers Garage.

"From there it just developed into the company we know today," Pannia said

Industry Start

The company designs forklifts for several industries, including construction, forestry and mining. Three years ago, Omega Lift introduced a series for auto recyclers, and dismantler input played a large role.

"We like to listen, and they like to talk," Pannia said. "It's been really interesting working with recyclers. They bring serious input to the table." He said he enjoys working with dismantlers because they have a true understanding of the product and how it works.

"They're very mechanically inclined," he said. "They know what they want and what they need. They can see we've designed a product around their needs."

In fact, one of the next offerings from Omega Lift will be a multi-loader designed especially for dismantlers. The propane-powered machine will go in and out of buildings, move in six directions and travel between racks. When in the "forward" position, it works as a regular forklift. It will be introduced at a trade show this summer.

"We always try to be innovative," Pannia said. "We're always developing new products. We enjoy customizing, we enjoy adapting. We don't put ourselves in a box; we look at the wide picture."

Creative Spirit

This creative spirit keeps the company moving, Pannia said, as does a dedication to quality. Omega Lift has seen very little employee turnover and Pannia said he believes

it's because everyone takes such pride in their work.

"[Employees] see we take pride in what we're making," he explained. "We don't just flood the marketplace with a cheap product. We also try to involve as many people in the decision-making process as possible. It's a team effort."

Dealer Selection

Omega Lift's focus on quality extends to all aspects of the business; for example, the company is highly selective in choosing dealers. Each are personally inspected before they are approved.

"We want a dealer that respects the equipment," Pannia said.

The company has customers throughout the United States and Canada, and even a few in South America, Pannia said. Many learn about Omega Lift through the company's web site, www.omegalift.net, which went live three and a half years ago. The site's detailed descriptions make it a handy sales tool.

"It's a good way to go over the product with an end-user or dealer," Pannia said. "There's enough information on there that the person looking at it gets all the details they need."

Omega Lift will soon move to a more modern plant at a five-acre site, but its commitment to customer needs will not change.

"We don't just want to supply you with a forklift," Pannia said. "We want to supply you with the forks, oil changes, anything you might need in the future." ■