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**By Karin Risko**

Moving goods worldwide via ocean, air, rail and road once required the services of five or more separate transportation and warehouse companies.

Today, one outfit may handle all the logistics as savvy transporters vie to remain competitive in a global marketplace by touting “turnkey solutions” and “value added services.”

As manufacturers, suppliers and retailers seek to reduce costs while increasing efficiency, they now demand door-to-door delivery from one source instead of dealing with multiple vendors, says The Hearn Group’s chief operating officer, Don Hearn Jr.

“With more companies cutting back services, they’re looking for suppliers to offer more,” Hearn said. “We offer turnkey solutions for customers.”

Hearn Logistics, the Lansing division of the Windsor, Ontario based company, handles all aspects of transportation from pickup and delivery to customs documentation and storage for clients such as GM, Ford, Chrysler and several Tier 1 automotive suppliers. To meet customer demands of dealing with fewer vendors, Hearn Logistics also offers what it calls quality containment, a visual inspection to verify accuracy and quality, and repackaging services.

Not only does Hearn transport raw materials and merchandise from destinations throughout the world, but it can verify or inspect the products prior to delivery to ensure quality.

“For customers requiring smaller amounts for inventory purposes, we can repack bulk capacity into smaller allotments,” Hearn said.

Sequencing and assembly is another high demand service Hearn offers.

With only a six-hour supply of inventory at many automobile manufacturing plants, parts are often shipped to order as cars travel down the assembly line. Alerted via computer, often with only a couple hours’ lead time, the components are assembled at Hearn’s warehouse using parts stored onsite.

Once assembled, the units are delivered to the factory. The factory gets the parts when needed without having to warehouse millions of dollars in inventory.

It’s been nine months since the privately held Hearn Group acquired Hearn Logistics, formerly PSA Quality Systems.

“Lansing has seen increased revenue due to GM retooling its facility,” Hearn said.

While six-month projections show a plateau in earnings, Hearn expects an upswing in activity for 2006. In fact, plans are under way to double warehouse size by moving to a larger facility next year.

Hearn attributes the company’s success to its ability to diversify.

“We have non-automotive customers, too,” Hearn said.

Pharmaceutical manufacturers make up a large portion of clientele in Windsor. Hearn sees that business expanding to the United States. Recently, the company acquired a United Kingdom lingerie company as a client. For this customer, Hearn Logistics does

much more than handle bulk transportation. The company will keep a 10-day supply of inventory for each item in its warehouse. Hearn employees will track and fulfill Internet sales by packaging individual orders and shipping merchandise directly to consumers. Great Lakes Warehousing of Charlotte offers third party warehousing and distribution services for manufacturers and suppliers.

In business over 25 years, the Charlotte facility has 60,000 square feet of available warehouse space, and the company's Holland facility, Great Lakes Warehousing's headquarters, has 420,000 square feet.

Business is good general manager Greg Patterson says.

"A competitive market over the last several years made us look at value added services,"

Patterson said. "We now provide extra services that people have come to rely on."

Extra services available include kitting, repackaging and cross docking.

Kitting is the process of creating point-of-sale or consumer ready merchandise by combining several products into one package.

Cross-docking services streamline delivery for Great Lakes clients. Individual trucks arrive at the dock hauling one item. The contents of several trucks are emptied and combined allowing each truck to deliver several products instead of just one.

"With our cross-docking services, we can receive in and ship out the same day,"

Patterson said.

Great Lakes Warehousing also repacks merchandise into smaller quantities.

"Our customer's specialty is in the creating process, not repackaging," Patterson said.

"Our services allow us to take this responsibility off their hands, so they can focus on their core business."

Offsite warehousing allows companies to maintain focus on their industries and not worry about investing capital to build larger facilities, Patterson says.

Great Lakes gives customers direct access to their inventory through the Internet. Clients can check product status and run reports.

"It eliminates phone calls. They jump on their PCs and have access. A lot of customers like that," Patterson said.

Manufacturers and suppliers of glass, steel, engines and plastics make up the majority of Great Lakes Warehousing's customer base.

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