

www.alliedphotochemical.com / HQ: Macomb Township, Mich. / **Dan Sweetwood, president:**
“We provide great service and rapid response times that exceed that of traditional competitors.”



EXPANDING CAPACITY

ALLIED’S NEW FACILITY INCREASES CAPACITY AND EFFICIENCY WHILE IMPROVING QUALITY AND SAFETY. **BY BIANCA HERRON**



ALLIED PHOTOCHEMICAL TAKES PRIDE IN ITS ABILITY TO FULLY COMPREHEND AND RESPOND TO COMPLEX CUSTOMER NEEDS.

Allied Photochemical is a manufacturer of environmentally safe, 100 percent solids, UV-curable inks, paints and coatings. According to President Dan Sweetwood, UV curing technologies allow the company to cure the coating or ink by passing the product through an intense UV light, which is beneficial in three ways.

“First, users don’t need a large oven, like traditional methods, because the required UV light will have a much smaller footprint,” Sweetwood explains. “Second, users can potentially increase their line speed as the required UV exposure takes only a few seconds.”

The third benefit is that UV curing technologies are environmentally safe. “Most UV curable inks and coat-

ings contain no solvents,” Sweetwood says. “This means it’s a cleaner, more sustainable technology because they don’t emit volatile organic compounds [VOCs] or hazardous air pollutants [HAPs].”

He adds that Allied Photochemical recently branched into traditional heat-cured products, which complements its existing offering. “We have learned that many customers require more than one type of technology,” Sweetwood says, noting that one change the Macomb Township, Mich.-based company is seeing in the UV market is the development of new curing systems such as UV-LEDs.

“While LEDs offer several advantages to customers, they require optimized coating and ink formulations

that provide the same performance parameters as their current formulations,” Sweetwood explains. “We are trying to use this to our advantage. We recently trialed an LED-cured coating on a high-speed metal line, which was an industry first.”

CUSTOMER FIRST

Allied Photochemical prides itself on providing a high level of “customer intimacy” that enables it to fully comprehend and respond to complex customer requirements. “We also provide great customer service and rapid response times that exceed that of traditional competitors,” Sweetwood says proudly. “When we gain a new customer, we spend a lot of time defining what the critical factors are for their process. We then build a system whereby we check those critical factors with each batch that we produce.”

This may include spending time with customers at their facilities and helping them with their process. “Sadly, we find a lot companies have become used to very poor service, no support and long lead times,” Sweetwood says. “We try to give them the opposite experience. More than anything else, I think this customer first attitude has set us apart from our traditional competitors.”

Recently, Allied Photochemical finished construction of a new 35,000-square-foot manufacturing facility that will allow the company to increase its production capacity and efficiency while improving

quality and safety. The state-of-the-art facility features a 3-D spray and curing pilot line that can accommodate large substrates, enabling prospective customers to run experimental trials with Allied Photochemical's formulations, Sweetwood notes.

"We increased our manufacturing floor space by nearly three times," he says. "This obviously gives us a great opportunity for increasing capacity and throughput. It also allows us to build in specific features to reduce hazards, increase safety and comfort.

"Additionally, it gives us the space to increase our product offering," he continues. "Many of our customers have encouraged us to formulate and manufacture traditional coating offerings such as solvent and water-based, among others.

The new facility allows us to expand into these other areas."

WORKING TOGETHER


Allied Photochemical has maintained an ISO 9000 certification for more than 10 years. "We take quality and productivity very seriously," Sweetwood says. "We are constantly measuring our performance by way of our ISO process. We review our progress during a weekly staff meeting."

Additionally, the company's supplier relationships are critical, because ultimately, they provide Allied Photochemical with "the building blocks," according to Sweetwood. "We are always very interested in the new materials they are developing and try to get a sneak peek before they are available to the market," he says.

Sweetwood has been with Allied Photochemical for 12 years and says that he is most proud of the culture. "We have assembled a team of really great people and we try to show them our appreciation every day," he says. "We encourage employees to have a good work/life balance and to be very candid. I think there's tremendous value when everybody says what he or she thinks without sugarcoating his or her opinions."

As Allied Photochemical looks ahead, its strategic growth plan is very ambitious, Sweetwood notes. "It essentially calls for us to double our revenue in the next three years and then double again," he explains. "We are not planning to make any acquisitions, but this could change if the right opportunity presents itself." **mt**

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(586) 232-3637
16024 Angelo Drive
Macomb Township, MI 48042
alliedphotochemical.com

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