



Stealing the Spotlight: G.W. Becker Inc.

By Heather N. Smith



Iron & Steel Technology visited G.W. Becker Inc. in Hermitage, Pa., USA, for our series that spotlights the grass-roots companies powering today's steel industry while positively impacting the communities in which they operate.

Beyond the reception area of G.W. Becker Inc., visitors are led into a conference room where the company's story unfolds before a single word is spoken.

Covering the entire back wall are towering photographs of overhead cranes. The images stretch from one end of the room to the other, showcasing completed projects and serving as a visual reminder of the scale, complexity and craftsmanship behind every crane that leaves the shop floor.

It's an intentional first impression. The photographs don't simply decorate the room; they illustrate what G.W. Becker Inc. does every day and what they stand behind. From fully automated overhead cranes and hoists operating in steel mills to specialized lifting solutions, each image represents a unique engineering challenge solved through collaboration, innovation and 45 years of manufacturing expertise.

It's a fitting backdrop for a conversation about a company that has evolved from an engineering consultancy into a respected manufacturer of highly customized overhead crane systems. Every photo tells part of that story: one built on engineering solutions that keep some of North America's most demanding industrial operations moving.

Over the years, facility acquisitions, investments in manufacturing technology and a commitment to engineering excellence have backed G.W. Becker Inc.'s steady growth. While the company has expanded, its core philosophy has remained unchanged: developing innovative solutions tailored to each customer's operation rather than relying on standardized products.

**"If it's not an option
that we have, we'll
make it for you."**

Long before G.W. Becker Inc. manufactured cranes, its founder George Becker was simply an engineer looking for a way forward. When another engineering company he worked for went bankrupt in the late 1970s, he made a decision that would shape the next stage of his career. Rather than searching for another employer, he started his own engineering and consulting firm.



Starting with a small group of clients and operating from his home, George gradually built the company through consulting, parts sourcing and service work in the overhead crane industry. Things progressed from there — moving into some major distributor lines as they helped manufacture packaged cranes or single units.

"My father started it as a small consulting business in the overhead crane industry, doing inspections, making hard-to-find parts and engineering parts for cranes that, at the time, were obsolete," explained Chris Becker, president of G.W. Becker Inc. (pictured above).

Chris grew up around the family business, helping after school with small tasks while his father was building the company from their home. Although he initially considered pursuing a different path after college, Chris chose to work for another crane manufacturing company for two years before officially joining the family business in the early 1990s.

For nearly two decades, the company focused primarily on engineering services. A pivotal moment came when a local customer asked the company to manufacture a large, specialized crane. Luckily, it happened to just fit into the small building they worked out of at the time. That project marked the beginning of the company's evolution from a service-focused business into a manufacturer of custom crane systems. Manufacturing services began to be offered in 2000.

The opening of G.W. Becker Inc.'s manufacturing facility in Wheatland, Pa., USA, allowed the company to build the overhead cranes and lifting systems it had long designed. Bringing manufacturing in-house gave



the company greater control over quality while creating opportunities to customize equipment for industrial applications.

Growth followed steadily. The company purchased its current facility in Hermitage, Pa., USA, in 2007 after outgrowing its original space. In 2017, another building was added just down the street. The sales and marketing departments, service crew and machining department were all moved to the new building.

“We ended up making a decision at the end of 2019 to expand again, and so we broke ground and finished construction in 2020, which was very challenging starting during COVID, but our backlog necessitated it,” explained Chris.

Although the company has grown, George continues to serve as chief executive officer and remains actively involved in an administrative role.

Today, decisions are made by people who understand the work because they’ve done it themselves, shaping the company’s leadership philosophy. That perspective has helped preserve the culture even as G.W. Becker Inc. expanded into a team of more than 75 employees.

“We’re nimble enough to do that.”

If one asks company leaders what distinguishes G.W. Becker Inc. from competitors, the answer isn’t horsepower or lifting capacity: it’s listening. Rather than





beginning with a standard product, projects often begin with conversations.

“We want to sit and listen to and hear your application — what do you really want in this unit?” explained Chris.

Every customer’s facility has different challenges. Rather than offering customers standard designs, G.W. Becker Inc.’s engineers customize systems. That flexibility has become increasingly valuable as manufacturers look for specialized lifting systems tailored to their unique production environments.

The company recently added significant new manufacturing equipment while continuing to expand its facilities and production capabilities. Those investments have allowed them to enter markets including aerospace and defense alongside their presence in steel manufacturing.

Internally, customer service is viewed as everyone’s responsibility. The company employs six estimators, but leadership insists sales don’t belong to one department.

“The sales department is not the whole company. The whole company is the sales department,” is written prominently on the whiteboard within the boardroom.

That philosophy means everyone, from engineering and manufacturing to service technicians, plays a role in building customer relationships. Rather than seeing itself as simply a manufacturer, G.W. Becker Inc. describes itself as a solutions company.

Customers aren’t buying equipment; they’re buying answers to their industrial problems.

“We’re solving the problem that’s there rather than just selling.”

Automation has become a major part of G.W. Becker Inc.’s business, ranging from fully automated crane systems to smaller semi-autonomous applications.

The company partners with automation firms to create systems that integrate directly with customers’ production and warehouse management software.

“That has become a big portion of our business, partnering with automation companies for integrated level 2 and 3 automation while handling some smaller level 0 and 1 automation project internally,” explained Chris.

One example was a highly automated steel mill operation where cranes handle material from production through shipping, with human involvement limited to mostly administrative tasks.

“A human doesn’t touch anything in the process, except for some paperwork in the office, until the straps go over the product on the truck as it’s being loaded,” explained Michael Lysakowski, marketing manager at G.W. Becker Inc..

Company leaders emphasized that automation today is being driven less by return-on-investment calculations



and more by workforce shortages. Rather than replacing workers, they view automation as a way to reallocate employees to necessary tasks while improving safety and economics.

They also described emerging technologies such as predictive maintenance, remote monitoring and real-time performance analytics that provide customers and service technicians with live data to improve troubleshooting, maintenance planning and equipment reliability.

“We’ve got great people working here throughout the whole company.”

Walking through the company’s facilities, the message becomes clear: people matter. G.W. Becker Inc. invests heavily in onboarding, technical instruction and continuous education. New employees don’t simply receive an orientation; they complete extensive training that includes crane operation, safety procedures and professional development.

Technical skills are only part of the equation, however. Leadership also believes strong communication and teamwork are essential to solving customer problems.

“People are a key element of our business,” Chris explained.

The company’s investment in people is showcased by Ronald Piso, the sales manager at G.W. Becker Inc., who recently celebrated eight years with the company. Back when he started, he came from the packaging industry with no prior crane experience. “I remember conversations flying over my head,” he recalled.

Today, he leads the company’s sales team. His story reflects the opportunities the company strives to create: bringing in talented people, teaching them the business and giving them room to grow. This is emphasized as the company regularly employs marketing interns and has hired several after graduation, viewing internships as another way to teach future employees.

A few of the machines they’ve bought recently are particularly of interest to the future generation of workers within the industry. As Michael explained, “It’s one thing to tell our customers we have this automation, but it’s also a recruiting tool that we made this investment in this shop.”

Recognizing that the industry faces a growing workforce shortage, G.W. Becker Inc. has become increasingly involved in developing future talent. The company partners with technical institutes, vocational schools and local

high schools to introduce students to careers in advanced manufacturing.

“We’re a big believer in the groundswell of needing a skilled workforce,” said Chris.

The company is a founding “keystone” member of the Lawrence Mercer Manufacturing Coalition, an industry-led organization which works toward attracting, retaining and upskilling the manufacturing workforce.

Programs like the Manufacturing Readiness Bootcamp provide students with practical exposure to industrial careers while helping employers teach the next generation of skilled workers. G.W. Becker Inc. also participates in the nationally recognized What’s So Cool About Manufacturing? program, welcoming students into its facilities and helping correct perceptions about modern manufacturing.

The company helps its community by sponsoring Little League teams, softball leagues and various other local organizations. It also supports regional manufacturing events and award programs designed to celebrate innovation and workforce development.

For leadership, community involvement isn’t viewed as marketing, it’s just part of being a local manufacturer. Members of the Becker family have connections to the historic Sharon Steel Corp. mill, giving the company a direct link to western Pennsylvania’s industrial heritage.

That history reinforces a sense of responsibility not only to customers, but to the region that helped shape the company.

“We’re big believers in industry involvement.”

G.W. Becker Inc. also remains active within AIST. Company representatives attend and participate in AISTech, are a part of AIST’s Cranes Technology Committee, collaborate with industry peers and contribute to conversations surrounding manufacturing innovation and safety standards. Involvement in the association keeps the company connected to emerging technologies while reinforcing its role within the steel industry, Chris explained.

Back in the conference room, the cranes displayed across the wall no longer appear to be mere pieces of equipment. They represent the decades of growth and hard work which led them there. They tell the story of a founder who transformed losing his job into an opportunity, a family that built a business from the ground up and a team that believes success is measured not only by the cranes it manufactures, but by the people it develops and the problems it solves.

In an industry defined by strength, G.W. Becker Inc.’s greatest asset may be the foundation it has spent more than four decades building — one customer, one employee and one innovation at a time. ♦



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