



FROM THE EDITOR

BY CORINNA PETRY

THE ROAD BACK

C OVID-19 and its mutations are still around, causing havoc in individual lives, but the life of the economy is on the rebound as the need for planes, trains, automobiles, warehouses, bridges, factories and refineries grows.

Our cover story this month (page 24) reflects the recent reality experienced by metals producers, which is that end users want everything they're making.

As part of that article, we spoke with Martin Little, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Concast Metal Products Co., based in Mars, Pennsylvania, about what he sees happening within the company and how

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MARTIN LITTLE, CONCAST METAL PRODUCTS CO.

to plan for volatile markets.

Compared with 2020, the first year of the pandemic, Concast's production has risen by over 30 percent. “We planned accordingly and are fortunate to have the resources in place to do that. We have the people to run three shifts, we have raw materials in place and we had the market timing. A lot of our production takes years of experience, and we have a lot of people with great experience. We deploy state-of-the-art technology, too, but nothing replaces experience.

“Our business levels have increased substantially,” Little says, and some of Concast's peers, especially those producing flat-rolled products, “had to stop taking orders because they couldn't meet the demand. It's a great market for them and us but it's also challenging. You must have strategies in place to take care of customers,” many of whom had seen imports delayed due to supply chain obstacles. “The situation takes some of the advantage out of sourcing offshore. You can't put a price on losing business you never get back because you cannot supply your customers when they need it,” he notes.

About five years ago, Concast embarked on a strategic initiatives process, and a leadership team identified all the key variables associated with running the business, “not just raw materials, but also packaging materials, graphite, freight, etc. One key item could shut a line down,” Little says. “So we identified all the variables and made sure we were well inventoried in all areas. Consequently, we had very little disruption with our supply chain.”

For many years, Concast built significant inventory. “In addition to making products specific to customers, we have 1,100 other items we make and stock monthly for inventory, which kept us well prepared for higher business activity,” Little says. “Rather than shutting down during COVID, we built our inventory and prepared for the upswing. That turned out to be a good decision.”

As experienced hands already know, a black swan event will pass and business activity revives once more. Preparation and planning are resources that never fail. ■



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+1-704-943-1030

info@cosensaws.com

Booth #

IMTS 236931

www.cosensaws.com