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Executive Interview

AMN Executive Interview with Daniel N. Schildge, President of CRP Industries Inc.

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 By aftermarketNews staff

In this exclusive Executive Interview, Daniel N. Schildge, president of CRP Industries Inc., discusses the company's unique position in the marketplace, footprint in the U.S. and relationship with ContiTech.

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Daniel N. Schildge is the President of CRP Industries Inc. He was appointed to the position in July 2008, after serving in a variety of capacities with the company, including COO. Schildge is directly responsible for the strategic and tactical management of CRP Industries and accountable for the development and implementation of the company's infrastructure, including all systems, processes and personnel. He is a graduate of Harvard University's Owner/President Management Program and holds an ME in Aerospace Engineering and a BS in Mechanical Engineering from Cornell University. A former U.S. Naval Officer, Schildge served as a submarine officer on the USS Columbus.

CRP Industries is a major supplier of quality OE automotive products to the automotive wholesale distribution channel in North America. It continues to maintain its long-standing partnership with the Continental ContiTech group and is credited with helping Continental establish the ContiTech brand in the replacement parts market. CRP also supplies OE quality product lines including Rein Automotive A/C and Under Car parts and Pentosin technical automotive fluids.

As CRP Industries' largest division, CRP Automotive provides a wide range of OE-quality replacement automotive parts to the NAFTA market, including timing belts and timing belt kits, serpentine belts, air conditioning parts, cabin air filters, anti-vibration and suspension parts and wheel bearing parts, as well as high-tech automotive fluids.

In this exclusive Executive Interview, Schildge discusses the company's unique position in the marketplace, footprint in the U.S. and relationship with ContiTech.

CRP has a very unique position in the marketplace – serving as a marketing partner to several significant companies including ContiTech and Pentosin. Can you give us a brief explanation of how CRP works within the marketplace and a little detail on the company's two operating divisions?

CRP Industries has been in business for over 60 years and was founded in 1954 by my grandfather, Dr. Adam Schildge. Automotive parts and accessories have always been at the core of our business. What started out as a small company offering 200 sizes of Continental tires has grown into an industry leader that supplies over 10,000 OE-quality replacement parts through the OEM and OES channels, as well as independent WDs. Our product lines include a prestigious list of well-known and trusted brand names such as ContiTech, Pentosin, Rein Automotive and Meistersatz.

Over the years, we have provided our European supplier partners with a gateway to the North American market for their products, while providing our distribution partners with high quality product lines, fair pricing, excellent customer service and exceptional sales and marketing support.

In our business model, we function as the NAFTA market business unit for many of our supplier partners.



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For example, we used to have a weekly customer order, a full trailer load that required two employees two days to process. Today, one employee can handle that order in one day. The customer benefits from a faster and more reliable order turn-around, and we benefit by being able to cycle orders more quickly and better allocate our resources.

Is it fair to say that CRP itself flies a bit under the radar? What is the company's marketing strategy?

For many years, we flew "under the radar," especially when compared to our competitors. We have been and continue to be an import parts supplier to the wholesale distribution channel. Today, we are certainly better known and this has brought with it new challenges. I believe as we strive to compete in today's very competitive market, this will help us continue to make performance improvements in all areas of our organization. However, we will not sacrifice to our core values for the sake of competition. Our integrity is very important us. We know and realize that success in our industry is not only about quality products, but also about relationships and the trust our customers have in us.

We employ a "push and pull" marketing strategy in which we work with our WDs to market and sell our products while we create a demand for our products at the professional service level. It is our belief that integrated marketing campaigns are the most effective and consist of trade magazine advertising, marketing partnerships, distributor promotions, e-marketing, trade shows, distributor open houses and product and sales training.

Our goal is to get in front of the final decision maker, the professional repair technician, whenever and wherever we can – whether it is riding along on distributor sales calls or participating at a repair technician technical conference. This is also key for our product development activities, because our best product development decisions have originated and/or were pre-qualified by the service techs.

One of your partners that is probably best known in this marketplace is the ContiTech brand, which made a number of expansions to its timing belt kit program in the past year. Tell us more about this. Do you think providing complete kits is something we will see more of in the marketplace going forward, and if so, why?

We have a 60-plus-year relationship with ContiTech. As their North American distribution partner, we directly manage the product development activities of the ContiTech timing belt kit program for this market. We invest a great deal of effort in product application research and quality OE component sourcing.

Earlier in this decade, there was limited market acceptance and interest in a timing belt kit, which usually consisted of a belt, a tensioner and idler bearing. Today, the timing belt product category has experienced a significant shift from sourcing the parts individually to ordering the complete kit. The rationale is simple. The kit makes the job easier. There's only one part look-up for the technician and counterman. Everything the job needs is in one place, and the parts are correct. No guess work. No hassles. Everybody saves time and wins. And we all know that time is money.

Three years ago, we introduced a new timing belt kit called the ContiTech Pro Series Timing Kit. This kit was the result of service tech feedback we received from various field visits by our product development team. It initially started with engines where the water pump was driven by the timing belt. Since a pump replacement was also recommended by the manufacturer, it made sense to include the water pump and any additional gaskets or hardware that might be required to do the job.

Initial distributor market acceptance was lukewarm to say the least. But as we gained distribution traction, many of our wholesale distributors experienced an immediate demand for the kit as professional technicians began to realize the time saved in sourcing and estimating a timing belt work order. The parts store was also saving time. In some cases, a typical timing belt service could involve more than eight component parts, which, without the benefit of the kit, would have to be searched and ordered individually.

The key differentiator about the ContiTech Pro Series timing kit is that it provides a definable value to all parties in the distribution channel. And the car owner receives the ultimate value of having a warranty that is identical to the car manufacturer's original timing belt change interval.

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