

Rethink repaving, says midstate preservation specialist

By Brent Burkey, *Central Penn Business Journal*, 6/15/12

Michael R. Leaman left the home-improvement business he was a part of about 20 years ago and started driving to neighborhoods in his 1982 Dodge pickup, offering to sealcoat driveways.

Recently, Leaman's firm landed a master distributor agreement with a North Carolina-based maintenance materials company that more firmly establishes his much-evolved business as far as the Pacific Rim.

York-based Total Asphalt Maintenance Inc. doesn't even put down asphalt anymore, Leaman said. It will subcontract the work if patchwork is needed as part of its services.

The firm instead has become an assessment, consulting and rejuvenation chemical application specialist that provides a way for customers to save money by not needing to repave their parking lots and surfaces, he said.

With rising costs for asphalt — petroleum goes into its manufacture — among the reasons, Leaman said he expects sales to be about 50 percent higher this year compared with 2011.

Also, the deal with the North Carolina firm, Chemtek Inc., is helping to take his firm in a wholesale direction, with Total Asphalt identifying and working with firms in certain market territories and selling the manufacturer's product to them, he said.

The business sector is a highly specialized niche requiring a firm to have a wide range of technical and business experience in its arsenal, so the distribution channel is pretty exclusive, Leaman said.

"It's not a one-trick kind of business," he said. "This isn't for a guy that just wants to spray some black stuff down on pavement."

Territories under the agreement include the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic areas, the Florida market and the Pacific Rim, Leaman said.

Total Asphalt had established a Pacific Rim connection beginning about a year and a half ago through a relationship with an entity working on a project in the Philippines, Leaman said. The firm had found Leaman's company via the Internet and the relationship grew from there.

Total Asphalt is the Paverx product's stepping stone to parts of the United States and Asia because of the company's location and connections, as well as its fulfillment of other distributor criteria, Chemtek President David Rigsbee said.

Chemtek began in 1976 as a specialty maintenance chemicals firm focused on solving unique maintenance problems through research and development — normally patenting the results — then distributing through exclusive channels, Rigsbee said.



Paverx, for which Chemtek and Total Asphalt have the master distributor agreement, started in the research and development phase about 10 years ago and has been on the market for airport application for about eight years, he said.

It moved to the wider commercial market about three years ago, and Total Asphalt is the company's first master distributor for Paverx, Rigsbee said.

Total Asphalt is authorized to select and supply distributors working with the product, but anyone else who wants to use it has to come through Chemtek, he said.

Keeping such controlled channels limited to firms who have proven they can use the product properly and run a good business is important to maintain integrity in the market, Rigsbee said.

The maintenance department of Lancaster County-based Masonic Village at Elizabethtown began working with the firm about 10 years ago after discovering Total Asphalt at a trade show in Maryland, said Tina Raybold, director of public relations.

Total Asphalt's technologies are newer than other firms in the market, and it is a great company to deal with, Raybold said. Masonic Village is happy with the results.

Leaman said he became active in attending industry and educational events early on and discovered there were better ways to preserve paved surfaces than just putting down a new layer of asphalt, or "roof," every so often.

Chemical applications for rejuvenation admittedly were a tough sell in the beginning, with potential customers turning away from the person hawking a magic potion that would make grayed pavement new again, Leaman said.

But over several years, Leaman said, Total Asphalt's offerings can save a company \$2 for every \$3 it might have spent to repave.

The firm has recalibrated its techniques to include knowing everything it can about the structure and engineering of pavement, making for a more holistic pitch that leaves customers more apt to buy into the service, he said.