

Jacobsen's Wilkinson Knows How to Handle Customers

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Dan Wilkinson, who replaced Dan Carlson as president of Jacobsen last October, said his background in customer service was a big reason he was selected to the post.

"My whole career has been spent building success around the customer," Wilkinson said.

It's no secret Jacobsen has had some customer service issues, specifically problems refilling part orders with its dealers. Wilkinson says Jacobsen has a powerful brand name, but it needs to refocus on customer service.

"At the end of the day, it was really my customer focus that brought me to the chair," Wilkinson said.

Jacobsen's woes began when the company started moving different

operations from place to place around the country, Wilkinson said.

"We went from having a Cushman facility in Lincoln, Neb., to having a manufacturing facility in Racine, Wis.,"

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he said. "We had operations in Charlotte, N.C., and operations in the United Kingdom. At the end of the day, we ended up with a lot of duplicate fa-

cilities. And it crashed altogether but not in a very planned fashion. That was the start of the downward spiral."

Wilkinson, who joined Textron in 1997 as director of national sales accounts at Greenlee, said Jacobsen also must be a better partner to its dealers. "Our dealers are in business to make money, too," he said. "We need to focus on the whole supply chain."

Wilkinson spent 17 years at General Electric working under Jack Welch prior to joining Textron. He said GE taught him how change — specifically executing change — is vital to a business growth.

"Something that was really ingrained in me in my GE days was the infusion of transformation — the willingness and openness to change," Wilkinson said.

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