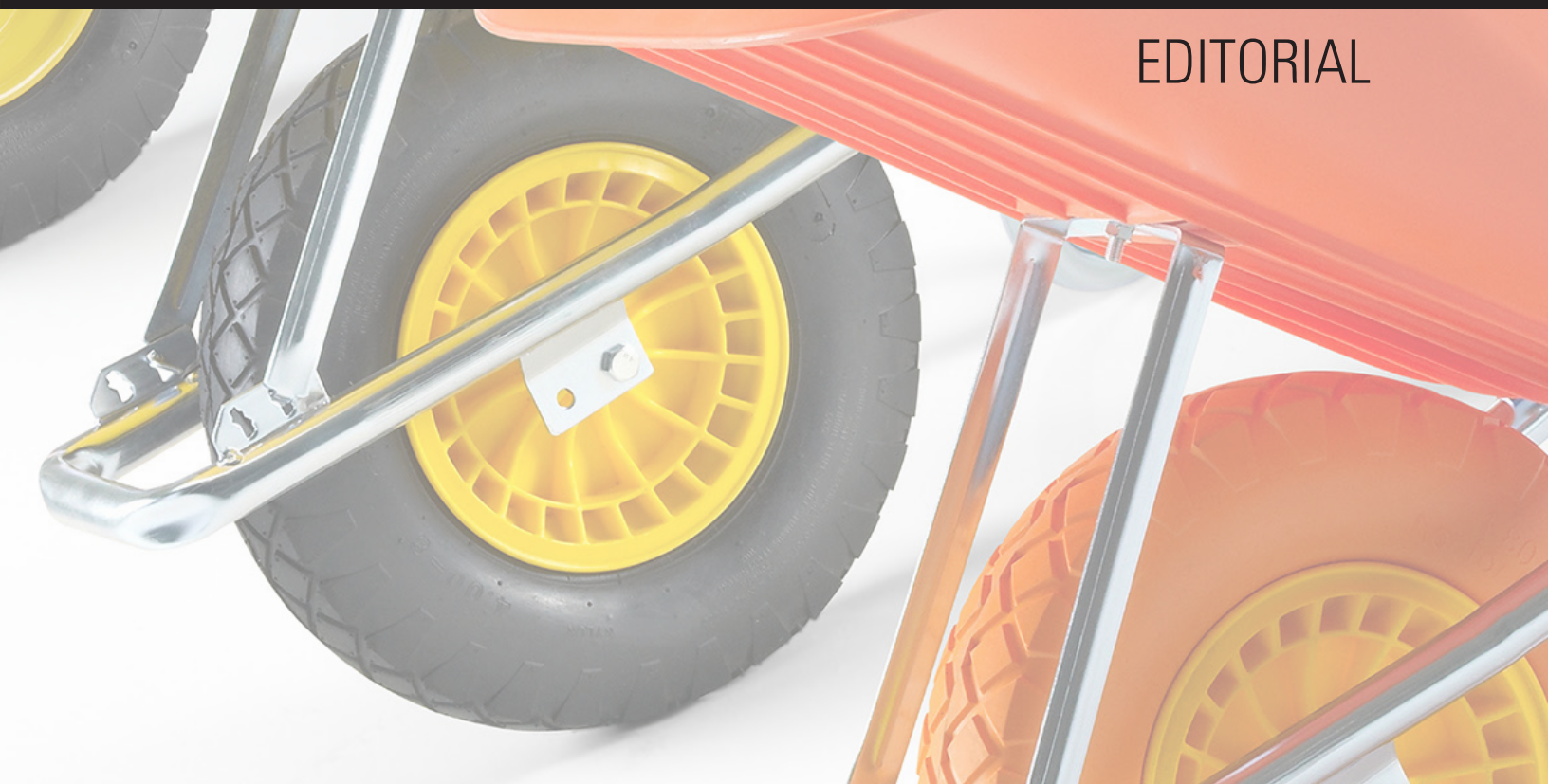




UP FOR THE CHALLENGE

EDITORIAL



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Canadian Wheelbarrow Manufacturer focuses on Innovation in all areas of the business to drive the business to new heights...

Founded in 1998, TUFx-FORT Manufacturing Inc., is far from a new company, it is already established as the manufacturer of one of the strongest and highest quality wheelbarrows in the industry. These wheelbarrows were developed using the initial ergonomic designs and technology of the Fort Wheelbarrow company in Holland, that name being synonymous with product development excellence and quality benefits associated with longstanding European industry leading designers. Though Tufx-Fort was founded in 1998, the Fort Wheelbarrow line has been manufactured and developed since 1950, so they've certainly stood the test of time!

The company was started and led by one of the original design engineers, Hans Kamphuis. Tufx-Fort secured the business of one of Canada's oldest and most respected retailers, Home Hardware, and is still a vendor in good standing with them today. However, in recent years, the business had declined and so the new ownership has invested significantly to put things back on track and has bought in Turn-Around specialist Dan Evans to do just that.

"There have been so many changes in the industry." says President Dan Evans. "The market is a living thing and does not stagnate. It changes and evolves all the time and each of us involved in the manufacturing and supply in these markets has to realize that nothing stays the same... we are either growing or shrinking, either getting worse or getting better."

Evans comes from a history of taking companies and bringing them through the harsh storming periods of growth. This was accomplished early on in his career with longstanding and most recognized Canadian brands such as Erie™ wheelbarrows, Jackall™ jacks, MIC Metalbuilt™, Lite™ ladders, Jacmorr™ workshop products. At one of his earlier positions, he and his team took the business from \$450,000 to over \$48M so he is well aware of the pains that come with rapid growth.

"The hardest part" says Evans, "is the change management...the people side of things. We are all, to a point, creatures of habit and we don't like to change, or at least won't easily, but it is a critical component to the longevity and success of Canadian SMEs. You have to start by looking and listening for change, then accepting change then eventually creating an environment where you drive the change – innovation being at the very heart of any truly successful organization."

Dan Evans was a long time member and former Chair of the Innovator's Alliance group (CEO network of high performing entrepreneurs who empower each other to build great companies through profitable innovation), and his belief in this area as a critical success component is very clear when discussing all aspects of the business.

During our conversation, he notes that there have been such significant changes in the way that key retailers do business that innovative thinking is an absolute must to maintain relevance:

Traditional EDLP (every day low price) big box retailers have shifted to a need to incorporate the high/low strategy being employed by mass merchant retailers such as Walmart or Canadian Tire. Likewise, the mass retailers now also like to incorporate EDLP methodology into their own business models.

The continued acquisition run of the American company Ames, combined with the acquired companies, Garant in Canada and True Temper in the US (have) to create(d) the largest Lawn & Garden product supply company in the world (wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes, striking tools etc.). Evans points out that these strategic changes continue to have a profound effect in the way some customers want and need to purchase products in a wide range of categories. He goes on to explain how he has changed the business operations for Tufx-Fort.

“While it was clear that a change was required in the business operations to accommodate this paradigm shift through cost containment, savings, efficiencies, etc., there had to be increased efforts in product development and supply chain management...”

A recent move to a far larger location in Waterloo was a start and includes:

- \$2.5M plant re-layout for improved throughput and quality control
- New product development
 - o New wheelbarrows for consumer market
 - o New cost effective patented flat free wheel options
 - o New industrial hand truck models
- Plans for new powder coat paint line for further vertical integration
- Plans for new E-coat lint for further vertical integration
- New fulfillment style warehouse operation – reducing lead times from 5 weeks to 1 day!
- Duplicate tooling in Asia to offer multiple FOB points for global retailers.

Evans concludes that the significant investment along with the continuous improvement processes implemented will be the differentiation that they need to succeed.

“As we begin to realise the advantages of this global network of operations, Tufx-Fort Manufacturing Inc. will be a market-leading vendor consolidation solution for key customer partners. Tufx-Fort Mfg Inc. will be a critical partner in its customers' supply chain, providing improved vendor management, new product development, inventory management and ultimately increased market growth and bottom line profit. Tufx-Fort Mfg Inc. prides itself on innovative best in class wheelbarrows, and that innovative core competency will expand across the new products and will focus on creating customer-driven solutions. Home improvement, building supply, and industrial customers now have a single source for their key product categories. This allows them to take advantage of 100% product availability guarantee, consolidated vendor management, product category and program expertise, freight consolidation and knowledgeable Canadian customer service.”

Evans notes that plenty of businesses these days seem to offer some kind of global sourcing options, but generally speaking, this is not enough for today's business environment. To that end, Tufx-Fort Mfg Inc. has created and employed a true globally integrated manufacturing model that allows for 24hr development opportunities & solutions between plant locations allowing for faster deployment into the field.

For a glimpse into the unbelievable performance from these “Best in Class” contractor wheelbarrows – take a peek at this unsolicited video showing why these are the #1 undisputed performing wheelbarrow in the world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4PBc64CdWg&t=1s>

For further information on the Tufx-Fort Manufacturing Inc's products and services, please contact info@tufx-fort.com.



TUFX wheelbarrows are Made in Canada.

All components of our wheelbarrows are made to the highest standards in our own factories either here in Canada or China. Parts and accessories are stored in our multiple warehouses ready for quick delivery.

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