

Long-lasting, safe scaffold systems withstand tough industry environment

Layher Inc.

When Pat Ross, president and CEO of Canadian-based Steeplejack Industrial Group, joined the company in 2004, it was on the verge of making big changes.

Steeplejack was historically a labor management company and didn't own much of its own inventory, but with a change of ownership and Ross coming on board, the company aggressively pursued work on the Alberta, Canada, oil sands — a huge industrial complex with well over \$100 billion worth of work scheduled for the next 10 years.

"We were awarded the material supply for two very large projects, which required us to purchase at least \$30 million worth of equipment," Ross said.

This is where Layher Inc. — a company that leads the scaffold industry in technology and offers a comprehensive service with an eye to the market of tomorrow — entered the picture.

While tube-and-clamp scaffolding represented about half of Steeplejack's scaffold requirements, the other half required systems scaffold.

Layher offers a full line of scaffolding products beginning with the Allround Systems Scaffold. The company also offers the SpeedyScaf, frame systems scaffold and roofing and enclosure systems that are unparalleled, such as the Cassette roofing system and the Keder roofing and side-walls system.

The Layher "Protect" system — which is a hard paneled protection that will hold a negative air flow — is ideal for asbestos and lead removal, weather protection, aesthetic applications and noise reduction. There is no enclosure system in the world to compare with the Protect system.

Layher scaffolds have a usage life exceeding 20 years with little maintenance. The company's product carries the heaviest of galvanizing in the market. Galvanizing is done at Layher's own factory and is constantly monitored throughout the manufacturing process to ensure perfection in product.



A tower built by Steeplejack at the Long Lake site near Ft. McMurray, Alberta, Canada, using Layher scaffolding.

Going for the 'gold' — The 'original'

There are a number of firms that have copied Layher's system and offer it cheaper, but Steeplejack wanted to have a "pure fleet," Ross said.

Since Steeplejack didn't own that much equipment, Ross made a conscientious decision to contact Layher and tell them that he wanted to standardize his company's fleet with what is perceived to be the most expensive but clearly the highest quality product with the most accessories.

"Also our company has to work in -44 degrees or colder temperatures at times, and we worried that the 'copies' wouldn't hold up to that sort of abuse," Ross said. "We needed a supplier with quality products that last, had the engineers on staff available to us for special assistance, and that was able to deliver the quantities we needed in the time line we needed."

Ross went to Germany and visited Layher's facility, getting some great ideas along the way.

"They helped convince us to convert from wood planks to steel planks and helped us identify our equipment by putting our name on their decks, boards and ledgers at the factory," Ross said.

Layher was the perfect fit, and as a result, Steeplejack — which normally received three to seven shipping containers of scaffolding per year — received nearly 750 containers last year from Layher, fostering massive growth for the company.

"When we were buying our equipment two years ago, we did \$41 million of revenue that year; last year we ended the year at \$86 million revenue, an all-time record for our company," Ross said.

More than just a scaffold manufacturer

Ross said Layher's owners took a personal interest in his business and came from Germany to visit Steeplejack's facility as well as the sites the company was putting the product on.

"They have really shown a keen interest in working with us and helping us to be a good supplier," Ross said.

The Layher facility in Houston has also been helpful if there is an issue getting something quickly enough from Germany, Ross said.

Layher has a history of forming alliances with customers and has done so for more than 50 years. The company's scaffold systems and service program encompasses much more than just manufacturing a product and selling it. Layher remains committed to its customers and supports them in many ways, such as operating as a "non-competing" scaffold manufacturer.

"The quality from Layher's product has been outstanding and the turnaround time has been outstanding, as has their flexibility with respect to financing arrangements and special pricing," Ross said.

Focus on safety

The No. 1 thing his company sells is safety, according to Ross, and so it was critically important that whomever the company bought equipment from wouldn't get in the way of maintaining its safety and continuing to prove its safety record.

"Layher was the only company that could come up with, as far as we were concerned, satisfactory engineering data to support their claims that their equipment was of the highest quality," Ross said.

Safety is a top priority at Layher. ISO certifications, German inspections (TUV) and compliance with the latest legal guidelines result in safety that is unmatched.

Selected materials and well-designed automation in manufacturing ensure constant quality in production, maximum precision and long life. This guarantees hitch-free assembly and dismantling.

The bottom line comes down to this for Ross: "Yes we pay a bit more, but in turn, if you take care of it, the product lasts more than 40 years. I think it's foolish if you have a long-term perspective not to buy the best quality you can possibly get, especial-

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— Pat Ross, Steeplejack CEO

ly considering the tough conditions we put our equipment through in industry.

"We're very enthusiastic about Layher and plan to continue to build our fleet with their products," Ross said.

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