

Steadily 'klimbing'

Founded 24 years ago, Klimer Platforms has gradually added to its product offerings while slowly expanding its footprint across Canada and the U.S. Lindsey Anderson spoke with founder Jay Gordon about his vision, the coming year and more.

Established in 1993 by Jay Gordon, Klimer Platforms Inc. wasn't always a manufacturer of mast climbing work platforms. In fact, it was six years after its founding that Gordon and his cousin Todd Gordon, who helped to originally start the business, were approached by a client that wanted something the industry didn't offer.

Klimer's management team then decided to invest time and resources into a research and development program and move into manufacturing. In 2000, Klimer Manufacturing Inc. was created and manufacturing of Klimer's first product, the KPM-8, began.

Five years later, Klimer developed and manufactured its second mast climbing work platform; the KlimerLite. The KlimerLite was introduced to the market as a more compact and totally unified unit. Following the KlimerLite, two years later, the company developed and manufactured the first Klimer transport platform designed for transport of crews and material, without the need of a dedicated operator.

From then on, the company continued its climb; in 2011 it acquired one of their distributors and added two locations; Canton, OH and China Grove, NC.

Today, the company employs 50 people across its 10 dealers in North America, including its most recently opened location in Easton, MD for the Northeast market.

ALH spoke with Jay Gordon about the company, his plans for the future and more.

HOW MANY MODELS DO YOU MANUFACTURE TODAY?

We manufacture our heavy-duty KPM-8, medium-light duty KlimerLite, the KTP Series of transport platforms for material handling and most recently we acquired the manufacturing rights for the Hydek mast climbing work platform. These drive units are the backbone of our business with a proven track record of performance. Our plans are to build off the strength of these drive systems with enhanced platform innovations for materials handling, loading and user safety.

Klimer has been an industry leader in

platform configuration; tackling some of the industry's more challenging projects and will continue to expand the potential of platforms for access and material handling.

HOW HAS THE MARKET SHAPED-UP OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS?

Throughout 2015 and 2016 we focused our attention on equipment rental and customized platform configuration markets with special emphasis on streamlining our business and improving the customer experience. We have significant market reach with five branches covering the eastern U.S. seaboard to western Canada. 2017 will see us leverage the strength of our branch network with more equipment sales supported by our

local market presence. Equipment sales are driven by our rental customer's success in growing their businesses. The strength of our equipment rests in our rental market where the market determines the next innovation, sets performance expectations for our equipment and proves performance and reliability.

WHAT UNITS ARE MOST POPULAR WITH CUSTOMERS AND WHY?

As a company, Klimer was built on the market's need to adapt to a never-ending variety of structure designs and faces. Our KPM-8, KlimerLite, transport platforms and now Hydek models provide flexibility to an expanding range of users in equal proportion.

ANY PLANS FOR NEW PRODUCTS IN THE COMING YEAR?

We are excited to announce we have acquired the rights to manufacture the Hydek product and will begin production of the next generation of Hydek in Spring 2017. The product line will be re-designed to provide greater ease for operation, increased efficiency and safety for users. We plan to enhance the platforms' design; we've consulted with users of Hydek,



Jay Gordon, founder of Klimer Platforms, Inc.

and incorporated their feed back into the soon-to-be launched platform. Our goal is to bring Klimer's ease-of-use design into Hydek product, to create a dedicated masonry machine that travels smoothly and is easily operated. Building off of its current support network of core clients, we plan to continue to grow those relationships through innovation, the investment in future developments and collaboration.

ANY PLANS FOR EXPANSION – WHETHER IT BE ENTERING NEW TERRITORIES, MANUFACTURING FOOTPRINTS, ETC?

This past year we opened a fifth location in Easton, Maryland to service the Northeast market.

WHERE ARE YOU SEEING GROWTH FOR YOUR COMPANY? IS THERE A CERTAIN SECTOR OR APPLICATION YOU'RE TARGETING MORE? WHY?

We will continue to expand our rental market

The Klimer Platforms team at the company's shop.

with access to non-traditional mast climber customers, re-thinking industrial access systems with our customers and continuing to leverage our engineering strength related to unique restoration work.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN THE INDUSTRY AND HOW DO YOU APPROACH IT?

Mast climbers remain an underutilized part of the scaffolding industry. Educating customers on the efficiency, flexibility and project enhancement potential of mast climbers remains a mast climber industry challenge. Ongoing proven performance will help us continue to find the balance between mast climbers and traditional scaffolding in the market as mast climbers earn their place in the scaffolding industry.

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT THE MARKET TO BE LIKE FOR THE NEXT 18 MONTHS IN NORTH AMERICA?

Opportunity for the mast climber industry to offer a coordinated approach to regulators and customers alike in terms of inspection detail, tracking, NDT and liability management.

WHAT DEGREE OF COMPETITION DO YOU HAVE? WHAT DO YOU OFFER THAT COMPETITORS DON'T?

Klimer continues to put an emphasis on project management. We are focusing on the customer experience – providing a streamlined seamless transaction for our customers. Klimer has a strong team of internal engineers, technical support, highly trained/skilled field personnel, customer service and sales reps, all with a



vision of how to execute a project, combined to offer our customers a multi-disciplinary/total solutions approach.

WHAT TRENDS ARE OCCURRING IN THE INDUSTRY?

Mast climbers are still a small part of the scaffold and aerial work platform industry, lacking broader market acceptance. Entry into industrial applications, new geographical areas and new customer entrenched in traditional means of access is difficult.

We are seeing the increased need for exterior façade repairs as buildings are aging so the restoration market is on the rise. There is even more of a focus on training and education.

We are also noticing the height of buildings increasing as capacities for engineering and technology continues to grow, which requires the MCWP market to adapt to changing building heights and also creates more demand for engineering (increasing in engineering costs).

Lastly, we have also noticed the expansion of social media use within the entire construction industry.

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOUR COMPANY – TRAINING, PRODUCTS, ENGINEERING, FACILITIES?

Our network of five branches spanning much of the U.S. and Canada combined with increasing demand for our products and services are key factors triggering an introspective look at what it takes to continue to grow as a company, meet the needs of our customers, invest in our business and build a sustainable business model. With this in mind we have been expanding the role of our regional management team to lead the organization, we have added a general manager in our Milton head office that has a proven track record with branch networks and we are putting the final touches on a new Klimer look for introduction in 2017 that really sets the stage for Klimer for the next several years. We are positioned in the key North American markets with the team to lead us – we are poised for growth.

Klimer's project scope for the Simpson Tower, pictured here, was to design, manufacture, supply and install material handling and access equipment at this jobsite.



Klimer is currently supplying a full access and material handling solution for a 47-story tower retrofit project. The iconic Canadian department store located in the heart of downtown Toronto was built in 1968 and was in need of exterior structural upgrades and a complete façade restoration. Klimer's project scope was to design, manufacture, supply and install material handling and access equipment.





ARE KLIMER UNITS BEING USED ON ANY IMPRESSIVE JOBSITE CURRENTLY? IF SO, EXPLAIN THE JOB, HOW MANY UNITS, WHY KLIMER WAS CHOSEN, ETC?

Klimer is currently supplying a full access and material handling solution for a 47-story tower retrofit project. The iconic Canadian department store located in the heart of downtown Toronto was built in 1968 and was in need of exterior structural upgrades and a complete façade restoration. Klimer's project scope was to design, manufacture, supply and install material handling and access equipment.

Located at one of the city's busiest intersections, the focus to keep pedestrians safe and occupants in the building undisturbed, was pivotal. No available staging area or material pathway were challenges overcome by a combination of engineering expertise and high performance KPM-8 work platforms.

Because of the limited space on the ground, there was no available space to receive and store materials to support the project. Klimer's solution involved creating a staging area on the tower's roof for storage of materials, jobsite trailers and other project supplies. In order to achieve adequate weight loads to support the staging area, Klimer was able to increase the roof capacities from 27 pounds/square foot to 100 pounds/square foot

The next challenge required Klimer to determine a method for transportation of material from street level to a staging area. Keeping in mind that the tower is fully occupied, and thousands of pedestrians on street level and towering neighboring buildings, Klimer supplied their KTP-5 transport platform. The transport platform was designed to include 15-foot ramps on either side to accommodate the 15-foot-long crates of curtain wall panels. The design allowed for the material to easily be transferred on and off the transport truck at street level, up to staging area which is supported above the 9th floor roof.

The project required mast climbers on all elevations, which meant once the materials were successfully delivered to the staging area, they then needed to be moved to all other locations. Ten KPM-8 mast climbing work platforms provided 360-degree access for personnel and material around perimeter of building when platforms are at the same

height. Each platform travels vertically with 14,000 pounds of capacity at 30 feet per minute. Five mast-climbers were installed above structural sidewalk bridges in order to keep sidewalks open to pedestrians and five mast climbers were suspended from columns of building with welded support brackets and supported above adjacent buildings. Mast climbers were engineered to reach 480 feet high, providing safe access to the entire building envelope.

PLEASE DESCRIBE IN-DEPTH HOW THE 2016 MCWP MARKET FINISHED UP AND HOW YOU EXPECT 2017 TO COMPARE?

In 2016 we saw most of our projects in new construction which was a surprise to us. We expected to see more demand for access to

restoration projects. We are starting to see more total project solutions instead of straight rental transactions. This means an increase in installations as well as an increase in engineering (for specific jobs).

The market is continuing to evolve evidenced by general contractors who are increasing their use of mast climbers to support multi-contractor applications, thereby streamlining their business model and overall project efficiency.

LASTLY, WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS/MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY?

People do business with people. We earn the right to repeat business by offering the right solution to a customer's needs and delivering on our promises. ■

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