

VMA'S MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR AND LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Command Medical and top exec earn dual honors

By **ELEANORE OSBORNE**
Special to the Business Report

David Slick Sr., president of Command Medical Products in Ormond Beach, was honored with dual honors by the VMA manufacturing alliance at its 34th annual awards banquet Dec. 11.

Slick's company was named winner of the alliance's Lou Fifer Manufacturer of the Year Award, which recognizes manufacturing excellence.

He personally was also named the recipient of the VMA's Manny Award, which is given each year to an individual for lifetime achievement in manufacturing.

"It is the Hall of Fame for manufacturing," said Jayne Fifer, the alliance's president and CEO.

Slick said he is "thrilled" to receive both honors.

"The Manny Award is a personal award and I am especially honored by that," he said.

The Manufacturer of the Year award, on the other hand, is a team honor, he said, noting that manufacturing is not a one-man band.

"The team behind me made this award possible," he said, referring to the employees at Command Medical.

Slick said the birth and growth of his company has been an evolutionary process.

It began in 1977 with his purchase of a manufacturing plant in Ohio, Slick recalled in a recent interview.

What was a man with a degree in marketing from the University of Detroit thinking?

"I never imagined I would be involved in manufacturing," he said of his decision to buy the plant.

On a fateful Saturday, he walked into a manufacturing plant to see what it was all about, and it was amore a prima vista — love at first sight.

Instead of being intimidated by the machinery and commotion, Slick said, "I had an instant love affair with manufacturing."

He saw ingenuity and promise in the three-ring binders, the check-book covers, the photo pages and other products that came into the plant in parts and left as finished products.

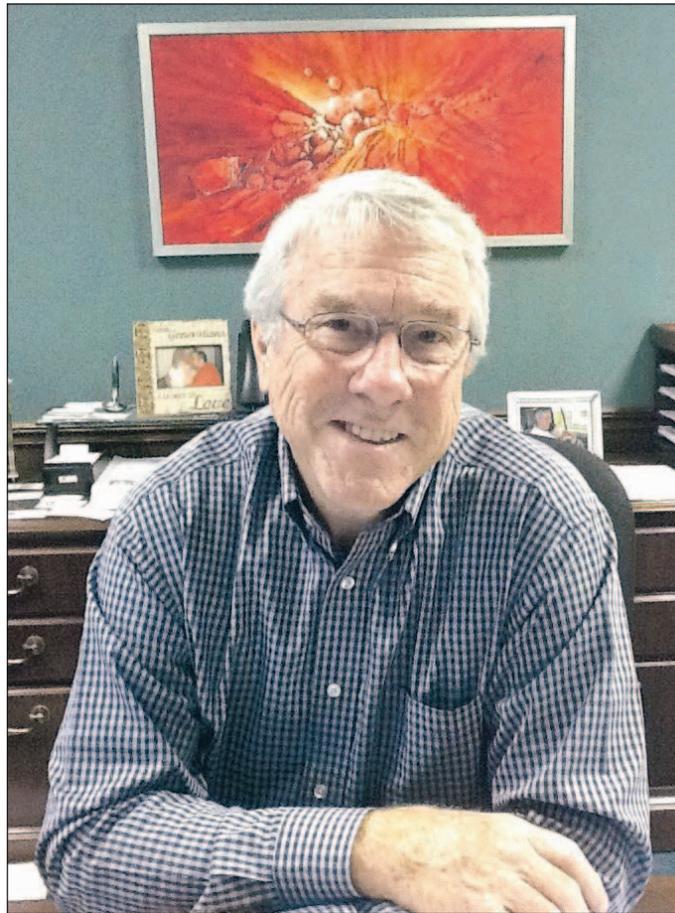


Photo courtesy Command Medical Products

David Slick Sr. is the founder and president of Command Medical Products in Ormond Beach.

Fortunately, he said, "I found out early on that I have some talent for engineering and design, all pretty much self-taught."

And so it began.

"To have a concept in your head," said Slick, "and to be able to transpose that into a design and a product ... it's creative, an absolute revelation."

Slick recalled once giving a speech at a VMA event that he titled "The Inadvertent Entrepreneur."

"I really had no inclination of

being the owner of a company," he said. "It never even seemed something you could dream of."

Being named Manufacturer of the Year involves a multi-pronged evaluation, said Fifer of the award that's named for her late husband, the alliance's founding executive director, who retired in 2006.

"This organization is who he was," she said, recalling his telling VMA members: "You will make the next 25 years as good as, or better than, the initial 25."

Fifer said the VMA committee members who selected Command Medical as Manufacturer of the Year were impressed by the company's commitment to core values that include accountability to its employees, customers, shareholders and the community.

Programs such as safety, employee recognition, and numerous training programs were among those that resulted in a significant reduction in turnover and improvement in morale, resulting in a motivated and engaged workforce, Fifer said.

Because Command is a contract manufacturer in the medical device market, quality training and accountability are incorporated into everyone's job, with each person having the authority to stop the process if quality is suspect, according to Slick. Operationally, Command has embraced programs that have resulted in dramatic improvement in top line revenue, profitability, and inventory turns, he said.

Slick said by the early 1980s, he recognized opportunities in medical device manufacturing: disposable medical products for chemo and insulin delivery and respiratory therapy.

"It employed the same equipment used in the original company, but for a different market," he recalled,

But when Slick got into the medical field, the regulatory requirements were very different because of the critical nature of the products, and he decided to separate his two operations. Besides, he wanted to move to Florida.

"I followed the sun," he said of his decision to relocate to the Sunshine State. "For eight years, every time we had a three-day weekend, I threw the family in an airplane, and we researched Florida from the west end of the panhandle all the way to Miami."

Even though the family of Slick's wife Toni had already moved to Tampa, he said he and his wife chose to settle in Ormond Beach.

"We were extremely fortunate to have found the Daytona Beach area. It is so unique, from NASCAR to

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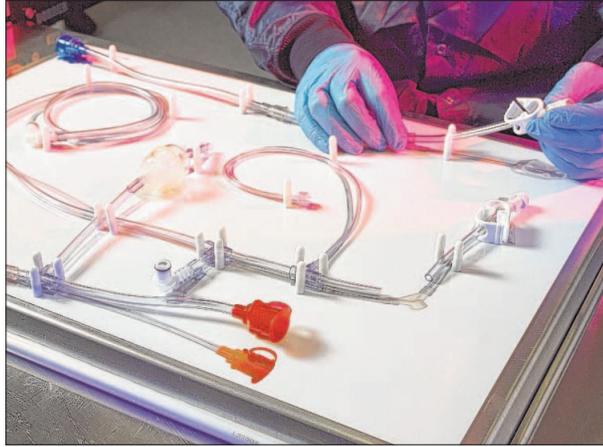


Photo courtesy Command Medical Products

These are some of the products that Command Medical Products manufactures.

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Bike Week, to the beach and the St. Johns, and very little crime or traffic," he said. "It is absolutely heavenly."

And the business has thrived since moving here.

"There has been a continuous increase in revenue, and the last five years have been spectacular," he said.

Command Medical has seen a one-third increase in its revenue this year, compared with 2013, he said.

"A lot of that is projects we have been working on for years, and just got to market, plus our increasingly strong reputation in the industry, and probably a little bit of luck," he said.

An aging population has also been a factor.

"Eighty percent of health care dollars are spent in the last six months of your life," he said. "We are in a market serving nine of the largest 15 medical companies in the world from our headquarters in Ormond Beach."

Of his company's 250 em-

ployees, half are here with the rest at its plant in Managua, Nicaragua, he said.

In addition to his involvement in the local community, Slick has received international recognition for his work with the Rotary Club of Ormond Beach. He was one of 150 people out of 1.2 million members who received Rotary's Service Above Self Award for helping children in Nicaragua.

"Command Medical Products," said Fifer, "embodies the culture that symbolizes the world-class organization VMA has selected as the Lou Fifer Manufacturer of the Year for 2014."

"This is truly a team effort," said James D. Carnall, Command Medical's vice president and chief operating officer. "These efforts have resulted in us employing almost twice as many people as we did at the beginning of the year."

"Manufacturing is alive and well in the Volusia County area and we are proud to be part of the growth," Carnall added.

Said Slick: "This company started off as an entrepreneurial venture, but we have grown as an extremely strong company, and every day we come in the door here, we make products that save people's lives."

QUANTUMFLO FROM PAGE 19

percent of its total sales, Carrier said.

Jayne Fifer, president and CEO of the VMA, said, "The company's growth in

the coming year to include the United Arab Emirates, Carrier said.

"Our goal, really, at the end of the day, is to produce the best product in the industry," he said.

Recently, QuantumFlo was named a 2014 "Florida

ing corporate culture.

QuantumFlo was one of only 50 chosen to receive the honor by GrowFL, which considered 500 nominations of companies throughout the state.

"There is a growing perception that Florida is a

"What is produced here can be just as good as that made in the industrialized states. That is the big message. Not just nationally, but internationally. We can produce a product here that is world class."

DAVE CARRIER

co-founder and CEO of QuantumFlo Inc.

Latin America has allowed QuantumFlo to outsource a considerable portion of their fabrication to other manufacturers in Volusia."

Besides selling its products in Latin America, Canada and the Pacific Islands, QuantumFlo is looking to expand its international reach in

Companies to Watch" winner by GrowFL. The awards program honors privately held second-stage companies headquartered in the state that demonstrate a capacity to grow, entrepreneurial leadership, a sustainable competitive advantage, and outstand-

great manufacturing economy," Carrier said, "What is produced here can be just as good as that made in the industrialized states. That is the big message. Not just nationally, but internationally. We can produce a product here that is world class."

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