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For additional information, please contact:
Trish Kempkes, *Director of Global Communications*
trish.kempkes@bwpapersystems.com

1300 North Airport Road
Phillips, WI 54555 USA

t. +1 (715) 339-2191
f. +1 (715) 339-4469
bwpapersystems.com

BW Papersystems celebrates 50th anniversary of its founding

Price County's largest employer preparing for continued growth and change

PHILLIPS, Wis. — October 10, 2018 — Fifty years after engineers and inventors Carl Marschke and Richard Thomas founded Marquip in the tiny northern Wisconsin town of Phillips, the corrugating and paper product machinery manufacturer—now called [BW Papersystems](#)—is celebrating five decades of remarkable growth and change. Last month, they marked the milestone with a picnic for its 600+ local team members. The event was held in Chapman Park, symbolic because the park is named after the family of Bob Chapman, Chairman and CEO of [Barry-Wehmiller](#), the global capital equipment and engineering solutions firm that purchased Marquip from Marschke and Thomas in 2000 and which has been shepherding the BW Papersystems meteoric trajectory from \$100M company in 2000 to the \$540M diversified global frontrunner it has become today.

“Founder Carl Marschke once told me he dreamt new machine designs,” Chapman recalled. “He and Richard founded Marquip on innovation and commitment to solving customers’ problems. We knew we could accelerate those capabilities and carry the legacy of their jewel forward.”

Propelling the jewel forward is exactly what Barry-Wehmiller has accomplished through acquisition and organic growth. Today, BW Papersystems is the combination of 13 well-known brands and has moved beyond corrugating to also serve the sheeting, packaging, stationery, book binding, and security documents industries. In June of this year, BW Papersystems further accelerated its growth when it completed a historic acquisition—its first in Asia—through a merger with K&H Machinery, a leading manufacturer of complete corrugators headquartered in Dongguan, China. Currently, BW Papersystems serves customers in more than 120 countries across the globe.

“Our goal is to be the global leader in the paper converting and corrugated market,” said Neal McConnellogue, BW Papersystems President. “Over the last 18 years, we have built a company with balance, depth and global reach. Our Phillips, Wisconsin headquarters was and is the foundation of the company and remains our largest and most profitable site. The team here is proud of that and also sees the opportunity to continue to improve and grow. Continuous improvement is part of our DNA. We know we can be better in so many ways.”

Growth has been a consistent theme of the BW Papersystems story. Worldwide, the company is closing in on 2,100 team members who work in one of the companies 21 locations throughout 12 countries. The 620+ team members at the Phillips operation make it Price County’s (population 13,600+) largest single employer and a vital component of the community.

“Everyone either works at BW Papersystems, is related to someone who works at BWP, is a friend of someone who works here, or knows someone who works here,” commented Trish Kempkes, BW Papersystems’ Director of Global Communications. “It’s big business in small-town America. All of my family, my friends, and everyone I see wherever I go in Phillips, counts on this crucial anchor of the community. Being located in Phillips creates an undeniable sense of community at Papersystems. The camaraderie we experience at work, and at a school sporting events, or seeing each other at the supermarket, makes for a strong support network for your whole life.”

The 50th anniversary picnic highlighted the company’s enormous imprint on the area, with multiple generations of families who have either worked there or had some connection to BW Papersystems in attendance. It is estimated that since its founding 50 years ago, more than 9,000 people have been employed at the Phillips location.

“When you consider the size of this community, that’s a significant number, especially since many of our team members spend their entire or most of their careers here. They join us and stay until they retire,” remarked Shayne Roberts, BW Papersystems Culture & People Development Director.



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As a consequence, Roberts and his team have their work cut out for them in the coming years. Facing a sizeable silver tsunami—the term coined to describe the large number of Baby Boomers due to retire soon—they’re focusing on innovative ways of recruiting new talent. “We’ve estimated that around 75% of our manufacturing and engineering workforce will retire in the next ten years so we’re doing everything we can to create a talent pipeline in rural northern Wisconsin,” Roberts said.

This includes collaborating with the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board (NWWIB) to develop an apprenticeship program that trains high school graduates for assembly and manufacturing roles. They’re also participating in college career fairs and events across the state to recruit for internships and co-operatives for associate-degreed electromechanical designers and those working toward bachelor’s degrees in engineering. They’re even using targeted social media advertising to reach highly-sought engineering talent who often look first to companies like Google, Apple or Intel.

“We’ve got something really special to offer, we just have to get the word out,” Roberts commented. “No doubt, there’s a wonderful quality of life in Phillips, especially if you like the great outdoors and the intimacy and pace of small town life.

“But if you really look closely at this company—our track record of growth and financial success and being part of a large global organization and then add that to our strong culture and deep commitment to giving our people a chance to grow and thrive—you’ll have difficulty finding the kinds of opportunities we offer in any company in any size community.”

In fact, parent company Barry-Wehmiller regularly brings other companies and groups to Phillips to tour the operations and meet team members so they can experience up close Papersystems’ vibrant culture and business practices.

“It’s the critical combination of people, purpose and performance—dedicated team members, united around a shared purpose, who perform together to achieve something bigger than themselves,” shared Chapman. “What visitors see at BW Papersystems is what’s possible when you create an environment where your people practices and your business practices are in harmony.”

This past May, members of the Conscious Capitalism organization and students from an Ivy League university toured the operations in Phillips. (Watch [the video](#) highlighting the unique gathering of business leaders and students to hear what they experienced.)

John Walter, BW Papersystems Senior VP of Operations, explained that their team members enjoy sharing the Papersystems’ story with visitors as it validates what they’ve accomplished. “But it’s not about what we have become, but rather about our journey to reach what we can be,” he continued. “At the heart of everything we do is a commitment to staying focused on our goals, valuing everyone’s role in reaching them, while understanding the need to continually improve. That’s the key to providing meaningful work for our team and a solid future for this entire community.”

ABOUT BW PAPERSYSTEMS

BW Papersystems, part of Barry-Wehmiller, combines extremely strong brands, innovative technologies and long-standing global experience in the corrugating and finishing, sheeting and packaging, and stationery, book-binding and security-documents industries. BW Papersystems brings together 10 brands—BW Bielomatik (BWB), BWP Zerand, Curioni, JAG SYNCHRO, Kugler-Womako, MarquipWardUnited (MWU), SHM, VortX, WillPemcoBielomatik (WPB) and Wrapmatic—that synthesize manufacturing in the paper process industries. We offer market-leading technology for full corrugators in a variety of configurations, rugged rotary die cutters and flexo folder gluers, as well as starch-mixing systems. Customers rely on us for folio-size, cut-size and digital-size sheeting and packaging of paper, board and other materials. In addition, BW Papersystems’ portfolio includes stationery, passport production and specialized paper-converting applications, as well as book-on-demand binding lines, digital print finishing and RFID processing technology. For more, go to bwpapersystems.com.

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ABOUT BARRY-WEHMILLER

Barry-Wehmiller is a diversified global supplier of engineering consulting and manufacturing technology for the packaging, corrugating, sheeting and paper-converting industries. By blending people-centric leadership with disciplined operational strategies and purpose-driven growth, Barry-Wehmiller has become a \$3 billion organization with nearly 12,000 team members united by a common belief: to use the power of business to build a better world. CEO Bob Chapman shares the story of the company's transformation in his book, [*Everybody Matters: The Extraordinary Power of Caring for Your People Like Family*](#). To learn more, go to barrywehmiller.com.

