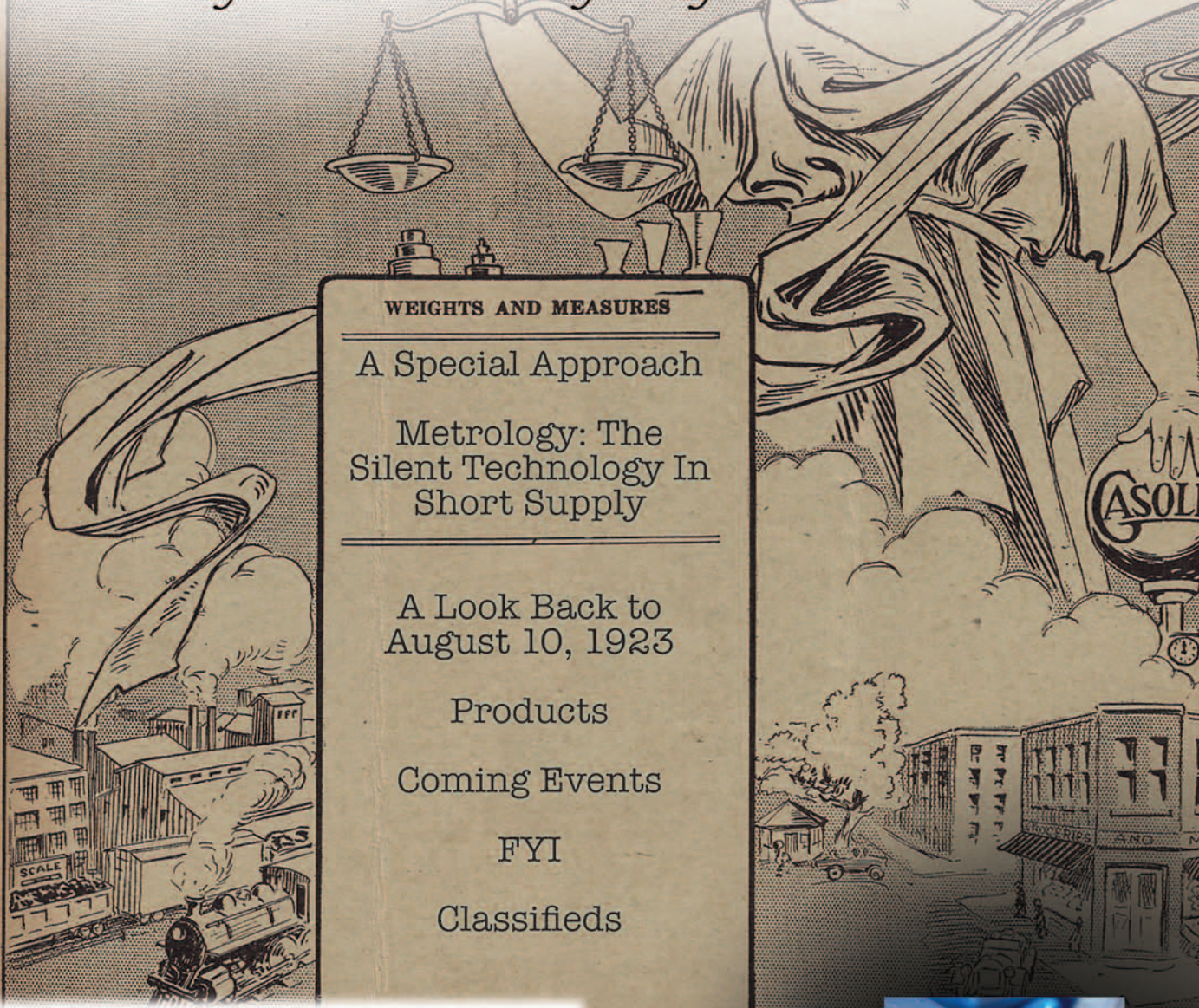


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A Special Approach

by Dave Mathieu

Midwest Scale Company was built on supplying their customers with special, customized scales to meet their application needs.

Two men founded Midwest Scale Company with an unbounded faith in themselves. In 1956, Morey DeBo and Bob Kennedy opened their independent scale dealership in Rockford, Ill. They were close friends working for Fairbanks Morse Company when they decided to go into business for themselves. At the time, Morey was the salesman for the Chicago area and was living in Rockford. Bob was the service manager for its Moline, Ill. branch. Each brought a skill to the business, but Morey was the visionary.

From the very beginning, these young entrepreneurs planned to run their scale dealership differently. They would sell scales to fit the application needs of the customer. This meant they would build special scales or modify scales if standard ones wouldn't do the job. This was a new concept because in most cases, at that time, customers had to make their needs fit the scales that were available.

Morey's DNA was innovation combined with a natural gift for running a business. He was responsible for developing many new, one-of-a-kind electro-mechanical and electronic scales for their customers when mechanical scales were still the norm in the marketplace. He was also responsible for starting a trade



Bob Kennedy and Morey DeBo installing a special scale for the Beloit Corporation, circa 1962.



Working on scales for about 38 years, John DeBo, president, was drawn to the world of scales through strong family connections.

journal for the weighing industry called Weighing & Measurement. (See sidebar.)

It wasn't too long into Midwest Scale's existence that it became apparent the company was more than a go-between for scale manufacturers and end users. The company played a vital role in the transition from

mechanical scales to electronic, always remaining at the forefront of technology. After developing one of the first electronic weight indicators and electronic counting scales, Midwest Scale Company assisted several major manufacturers with their design efforts resulting in significant product development and technology advancement for the entire scale industry. Of course they installed and serviced truck scales and light-capacity industrial scales as well.

In addition to the new product sales, the new dealership created a good reputation built on personal

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Sandy Lubs has been the company controller for 33 years.



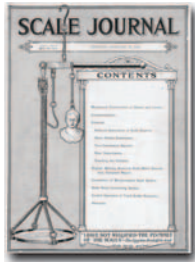
Dale Alcock, application specialist, helps customers make informed decisions to solve their weighing needs. He has been with Midwest Scale for 12 years.



John Totten, sales and service quality manager, is responsible for all ISO 17025 procedures. He has 41 years in the scale industry, the last 12 years with Midwest Scale.



Scale Technician Brad Mitton has been with the company 13 years.



The 1915 Scale Journal Cover



Scale technician David Prothero has been with the company for 5 years.



Dave Matthieu's first issue with Morey (1972)



Scale technician Jack Lockwood has been with the company 26 years.



Newly hired scale technician Irv Bitter has 35 years in the scale industry.

service. Bob Kennedy's expertise was in the servicing of scales, but he wasn't comfortable in the business-side of things. After several years, he convinced Morey to buy out his shares and let him be service manager of their new branch in Moline, Ill. Morey agreed to his friend's request and became sole owner of the company.

Through the years, Midwest Scale Company has grown significantly and remains a consistent, stable and reliable source of scales and scale related products in the northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin area. Serving a diverse cross section of businesses including manufacturing, agriculture and commercial scales, the company provides all facets of scale implementation including a thorough and competent up-front evaluation of the application, careful recommendations of high value products and timely delivery installation and service.

New Leadership

It's been said that the greatest use of life is to spend it on something that will outlast it. Such was the case of Morey DeBo. He had laid the foundation for continuance of his company even after he was gone.

In 1979, Morey wanted to retire from the business. His son, John, and Bob Kennedy formed a consortium and bought out his father in October 1979. He had his father at his beck and call during the early years of the acquisition. Sadly, it ended much too soon, when Morey died four years later of heart surgery complications. However, Morey's legacy lives on through his son who is now sole owner of the company.

John DeBo, 54, said he was fortunate to have a great relationship with his father, who instilled in him his belief that a business should be learned "from the ground up." During his high school days, as well as college years, he worked in his father's shop during the summer months. He has lived and breathed scale business all his life. Although he was a bit apprehensive when it came to pursuing the scale business as a profession, he always knew he would eventually work in his dad's business.

"I was drawn to the world of scales through strong family connections," DeBo says. "Obviously, my father was heavily involved in the industry and my grandfather was an engineer at Fairbanks Morse, retiring with 40 years in the company."

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Company Re-acquisition

In 1989, Midwest Scale was acquired by an investment holding company, G.W. Venture, and DeBo continued to work for them as general manager. The company could have slipped unremembered into the annals of scale dealerships, but in 2000, Midwest Scale was re-acquired by DeBo.

DeBo wanted his re-acquired company to stay true to its roots so he decided to sell their two branches, one located in Moline, Ill. and the other in Milwaukee, and concentrate on a 60-mile radius of Rockford.

Customized Weighing Solutions

The keystone to Midwest Scale's reputation was, and is, its ability to focus on customized weighing solutions. The company's ability to meet individual needs of customers while alleviating some of the cost is of utmost importance.

"We have survived and prospered by emphasizing this," says DeBo. "With hands-on knowledge of an application, we can research and select the best products available while keeping a watchful eye on the total cost. Our focus is not just to 'sell' something, but rather to help our customer make an informed decision that will solve their weighing needs.

"We always try to do it at a competitive cost and with a minimum of maintenance and downtime. I believe that the old adage, 'The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten' still holds true. Our goal is to develop long term relationships through the honest application of equipment and timely support."

Today, as an independent dealer, Midwest Scale handles the brands of B-Tek, Emery-Winslow, Cardinal, Rice Lake and Setra.

Service

Up through the '80s and early '90s, new product sales were 60 percent of the Midwest Scale's revenues. Today, that percentage is just the opposite — 60 percent is service revenues. With the focus changed from sales to service, the company offers a broad range of service for all types and brands of weighing products, from heavy-duty railroad and truck scales to micro-analytical balances. Their state-licensed, mobile field service staff is available on a 24/7 basis.

The service department has one test truck with 20,000 pounds of weights and four service vans loaded with parts and tools. For the NTEP truck scale calibration jobs, DeBo purchased a custom-designed test cart to accompany the test truck to the site.

All Midwest Scale service technicians are factory trained and carry a variety of spare parts and loaner equipment with them. A state-of-the-art electronics lab where the most difficult problems can be diagnosed and

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repaired supports the technicians. All of the company's test weights are carefully maintained and re-calibrated on a regular schedule as well.

The company has also expanded its service range to include calibration of measurement devices by working in cooperation with Alpha Gage, a local calibration company, that is contacted when a customer needs this service. And they call Midwest Scale when their customers need calibration of scales. It has been a good business relationship because DeBo can give his customers what they need without the extensive cost associated with buying the equipment and hiring technicians to enter this field.

Quality

Today's increasingly educated customer has an ever-growing hunger for quality and value. DeBo believes that companies that work to satisfy that appetite will survive today's economic climate. To make sure the company would be able to meet the demands of its customers, Midwest Scale became ISO 17025 certified in 1998.

DeBo knows that high quality requires hard work and dedication by his loyal staff of nine. He stated that his strategy has always focused on the employees because you have to trust them to make continuous improvements in order to contribute to higher quality products and service for the customer.

He turned over the responsibility of Midwest Scale's ISO certifications and the annual audits to John "JT" Totten, sales and service quality manager. "The ISO 17025 certification has proven to be very important for us," he said. "Although it's expensive, it's the tool we need to get service contracts. Today, about 50 percent of our industrial customers require ISO certification to do business with them."



With 32 years with the company, Dan Wicinski, technical support technician, is the go-to guy for electronic, component-level repairs.

Marketing Methods

The market landscape in Rockford and surrounding area has changed dramatically in the past decade. Gone are the major industrial giants in the fastener and machine tool industries. Today, the major markets for Midwest Scale are aggregate industry, agri-businesses and light- to medium-sized manufacturing.

Direct mail and cold calls are the main marketing techniques used by DeBo. However, he has developed his own web site. "I do it myself and so it's not a real professional space," he says. "It's used to provide information, mainly for salesmen to assist the end user. Today, it seems like customers want the smaller scales immediately or they'll go somewhere else to buy. We can guide them to our site where they can quickly choose what they need. We do get leads from our site. We've received some big jobs because the customer was looking for someone in the area."

Company Policy Never Changes

The basic philosophy of Midwest Scale Company has never changed. Its first and most important responsibility is to provide for its customers with superior service. DeBo believes continued dedication to this business ethic will sustain his company as a leader in the industry for generations to come.

We asked DeBo what is most satisfying to him about his company. He said, "I think it's been solving problems that people have had with the weighing process. We're known for doing specials to solve weighing problems. We work in a lot of areas that other companies don't want to get into. And it's very satisfying to see a successful project completed, one that is much more complex than just taking an order and shipping a product."

Morey DeBo Purchases Scale Journal in 1971

In November of 1971, Morey DeBo purchased the Scale Journal from Sylvia Pickell, director of the National Scale Men's Association (NSMA). He hired me as editor and asked me to turn this association publication into a full-fledged trade magazine for the weighing industry that would also go to end users of scales. Our first issue was February 1972.

Morey's first Publisher's statement was: "I believe we have done a good job through the years in communicating among ourselves in

the weights and measures industry, but we have been most negligent in our approach to the users of weights and measures equipment, an error which must be righted.

"When I decided to take on the awesome task of publishing the Scale Journal, I did it because I wanted to make all industries more aware of the importance of accurate weighing and measuring."

In an attempt to encompass in the name the total spectrum of the growing industry, Morey changed the name of the magazine from

Scale Journal to Weighing & Measurement in January 1974. A year later he sold the magazine to me. For the past 34 years the Mathieu (my son, David, is now the Publisher) have published Weighing & Measurement with the same commitment as its former owner, Morey.

Morey was a man of vision in an industry that he loved. As a friend and former employee, I can testify that Morey DeBo was the person responsible for our industry having a trade magazine today — a dream he had for many years. — Dave Mathieu