



Q & A :

RISING UP THE JASPER RANKS

Weinzapfel rose up the ranks at Jasper Engines & Transmissions, beginning as a college intern primarily with the accounting group.

Photo: Jasper Engines & Transmissions

IN A STORY OF TENACITY AND GROWTH, FIND OUT HOW THE NEWEST PRESIDENT OF JASPER ENGINES & TRANSMISSIONS ROSE THE RANKS AND HIS GOALS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE COMPANY.

In January 2023, Jasper Holdings, Inc. named a new president of Jasper Engines & Transmissions: Matt Weinzapfel. Beginning with Jasper Engines & Transmissions in May 1992, his story is one of “rising up the ranks,” from intern to executive leadership. We sat down with Weinzapfel to learn more about his time at JASPER, company growth, future goals, and more.

WT: CAN YOU SHARE YOUR STORY ABOUT HOW YOU ROSE THROUGH THE JASPER RANKS FROM INTERN TO PRESIDENT?

WEINZAPFEL: I worked as a college intern for two summers, primarily with our accounting group. I got a call halfway through my senior year from our CEO, Doug Bawel, asking if I was interested in returning full-time after graduation. I took time to weigh a few other options, but ultimately knew I enjoyed the culture and people at Jasper Engines & Transmissions. I was also pleased to have a great opportunity in my hometown, which is a great place to live and raise a family.

JASPER was much smaller when I came on board. We all wore many different hats to keep the company growing. I began as part of the accounting group, but

my primary focus was aligning business processes within our factory-owned distribution locations.

I gained a lot of knowledge about our distribution network in that role. I was asked to be on the planning team when we built our first satellite manufacturing facility near Leavenworth, Indiana.

After much involvement with planning and construction, I was asked to become the first plant manager of the new facility. (In hindsight, I was probably the only person who would agree to drive the 45 minutes from Jasper each day to the new plant!) I was 26 and had no real leadership or manufacturing experience, but the opportunity was too good to pass up.

I stayed in that role for about five years before heading back to our headquarters to lead our gas and diesel manufacturing groups for the next three years. During that time, our leadership team got very focused on Lean manufacturing.

We created a “Lean” group called the JASPER Production System (JPS). I eventually transitioned to a role in JPS to help expand our process improvement activities. I stayed in that role for a few years before heading back

to manufacturing leadership with a specific focus on our Diesel Division.

For those first 11 years that I was involved in manufacturing, my mentor was our Executive VP of Manufacturing, Mike Schwenk.

Mike was an amazing role model for me, but honestly, he had his hands full, leading all operations of a quickly growing company.

After two years in the Diesel Manager role, I was able to take a chunk of Mike's workload. We effectively split the manufacturing operations, with me taking on gas and diesel manufacturing while Mike held onto the transmission and differential production.

Mike and I worked together for 12 years before his retirement in 2021. Shortly after, I was named Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of Manufacturing.

I held that role until being named President and COO in January of this year.



Today, Weinzapfel is responsible for the overall performance of the JASPER brand.

Photo: Jasper Engines & Transmissions

WT: PLEASE SHARE A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

WEINZAPFEL: As president of Jasper Engines and Transmissions, I am responsible for the overall performance of the JASPER brand. My background has been primarily in manufacturing operations. The new role will allow additional involvement with our sales and distribution functions.

When JASPER became an employee stock ownership

plan (ESOP) in 2010, we knew part of our growth strategy would be acquiring other companies. Since then, we have been successful in our plan to grow our brand.

To facilitate this activity, we created a holding company, Jasper Holdings, Inc. Today, Jasper Holdings, Inc. is roughly a billion-dollar company, with added brands including Jasper Innovative Solutions, Weller Truck Parts, Diesel USA, D&W Diesel, Jasper Electric Motors, and Jer-Den Plastics.

Jasper Engines and Transmissions makes up about 60% of the total holding company revenue, and several of our leaders work between both organizations.

With me assuming the president role at JASPER, our previous president, Zach Bawel, will take a more active role in leading the holding company, allowing for additional support to our other brands and continued attention to future acquisitions.

WT: WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR GOALS WITH YOUR NEW POSITION?

WEINZAPFEL: I have many, but let's focus on two.

First, build our leadership team for the future. We have a tremendous amount of talent within our current leadership team. JASPER has many great leaders in their 30s, 40s, and 50s who can grow within our organization.

With the success of our ESOP, we are building some hefty retirement accounts that will allow many of these leaders to have flexibility with their retirement dates.

Additionally, we are a large company located in a small community. We must be focused on developing the next generation of leaders to ensure that we can continue providing great employment and retirement to our 4,200 Associate-Owners under the Jasper Holdings, Inc. umbrella and continue supporting our communities.

Second, we must build our manufacturing capacity to match customer demand.

The remanufacturing industry has experienced tremendous growth since the onslaught of COVID-19 in 2020. Labor and supply shortages have impacted new vehicle production, so used vehicles are being repaired much

faster than pre-2020.

Before COVID-19, JASPER sold most of its products out of finished goods inventory. We manufactured to inventory and “sold orders” on our production floor, rarely reaching 300 or 400 across all manufacturing plants.

At the height of the pandemic, we saw our orders climb to around 9,700 at one point. While we have worked that number back down to about 5,000, our customers are still burdened with excessive lead times for our products.

Traditionally, we deliver most products to our customers within a day or two from the time of the order. Today, we have some products with lead times of up to a few months.

Materials and labor shortages continue to challenge us, and we’ll have to find ways to increase capacity as long as customer demand remains strong.



Weinzapfel noted that “we must be focused on developing the next generation of leaders.”

Photo: Jasper Engines & Transmissions

WT: CAN YOU SHARE A LITTLE ABOUT JASPER ENGINE & TRANSMISSIONS’ GROWTH OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS?

WEINZAPFEL: We have grown significantly by adding other brands to the JASPER family. Still, Jasper Engines & Transmissions has also seen organic growth.

Ninety percent of JASPER’s sales are for products installed in fleet vehicle applications. As these vehicle segments and industries have grown over the past several years, our business has grown along with them.

In addition, we have gotten more aggressive in releasing new products earlier in their lifecycle to capture OE

product failures as they are coming out of OE warranty coverage.

Our customer base is made up primarily of independent garages and fleet operations. JASPER has nearly 150 outside sales representatives across the U.S. that build relationships with shop owners and fleet managers.

Our wide variety of product offerings, including gas and diesel engines, transmissions, differentials, and fuel and air components, make us a one-stop shop for many customers.

I believe the other factor that has helped us grow is our distribution model. While most of our competitors distribute their products through OE channels or auto parts stores, JASPER has built our business by maintaining control of our distribution network.

We currently have more than 50 factory-owned distribution locations in major metropolitan areas from coast to coast. We have a fleet of 40-plus over-the-road trucks that touch each distribution location three to five times per week to deliver fresh inventory.

Finally, around 150 local box trucks deliver the product from our distribution locations directly to the installer. Our Associate-Owners bring the product into the customer’s facility and then return after installation for core pickup.

WT: WHAT TRENDS DO YOU SEE NOW RELATED TO REMANUFACTURED ENGINES AND TRANSMISSIONS?

WEINZAPFEL: Remanufacturers continue to battle both supply chain and labor shortages. While we have seen some relief in parts availability, we continue to battle labor shortages across many of our manufacturing facilities.

There have also been many challenges with suppliers substituting parts due to supply shortages. At JASPER, we have a robust system of first-piece qualification and routine incoming parts inspection that has prevented us from using substandard parts.

In the past few years, we had to ramp up those efforts to ensure that the part we originally approved was still

coming in the box today. JASPER has made tremendous investments in new lab equipment to help us better qualify the parts used in our manufacturing.

The final trend that comes to mind is the increasing complexity of the products we remanufacture. With every new product release, the proliferation of electronics within our transmission and diesel product lines continues to be challenging.

On the gas engine side, we had to step up our game with CNC machining technology and robust fixturing to ensure that we could hold tighter tolerances on today's thin, lightweight castings.

WT: WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU SEE NOW RELATED TO FLEETS AND PROCUREMENT OF ENGINES AND TRANSMISSIONS? HOW CAN REMANUFACTURED OPTIONS HELP THEM STAY ON THE ROAD?

WEINZAPFEL: A large percentage of our business works directly with national fleets. In addition to those direct relationships, many of our independent garage owners have their customer list of smaller fleets that may include businesses such as construction, plumbing, or regional package delivery.

Due to the heavy concentration of fleets in our customer base, we have created a fleet advisory council to help us understand the needs of fleet managers and the vehicles relevant to their businesses.

Today, more than ever, our fleet advisory members are looking to replace failed components to keep their vehicles on the road. The lack of new vehicle availability and the cost of those replacement vehicles play into that decision.

Our fleet managers also help us understand the specific challenges they face from the vehicles within their fleets. Across all makes and models, there are common modes of failure for certain engines and transmissions. Our fleet customers look to JASPER to engineer out those OE defects and ensure that the vehicle has a longer life after being repowered.

The engineers in our product development and quality

groups are constantly working to identify ways we can improve upon the original design. We have many great examples of those improvements across our breadth of products.



Matt Weinzapfel was named president of Jasper Engines & Transmissions in January 2023.

Photo: Work Truck/Jasper Engines & Transmissions

WT: LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD, WHAT ARE FUTURE INDUSTRY TRENDS AND CHALLENGES OUR INDUSTRY MIGHT FACE?

WEINZAPFEL: There is a great deal of talk today around the electrification of vehicles and the risk that trend poses for remanufacturers like JASPER. While watching market trends, the internal combustion engine has much runway yet to cover. Our primary product focus is on pickup trucks, vans, SUVs, and package delivery applications. Many of our customers are fleet operators relying on their vehicles for towing and hauling as part of their livelihoods.

At JASPER, we feel these vehicle applications, specifically this customer base, will be slower to transition to emerging technologies due to limitations on battery life and needed infrastructure to keep the vehicles on the road.

WT: ANY ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS TO SHARE WITH OUR WORK TRUCK READERS?

WEINZAPFEL: I would like to thank the rest of the JASPER leadership team and our 4,200 Associate-Owners for their support in my new role. I am blessed to be part of such a great organization, and I look forward to many years of continued growth!