

 Charleston Aluminum





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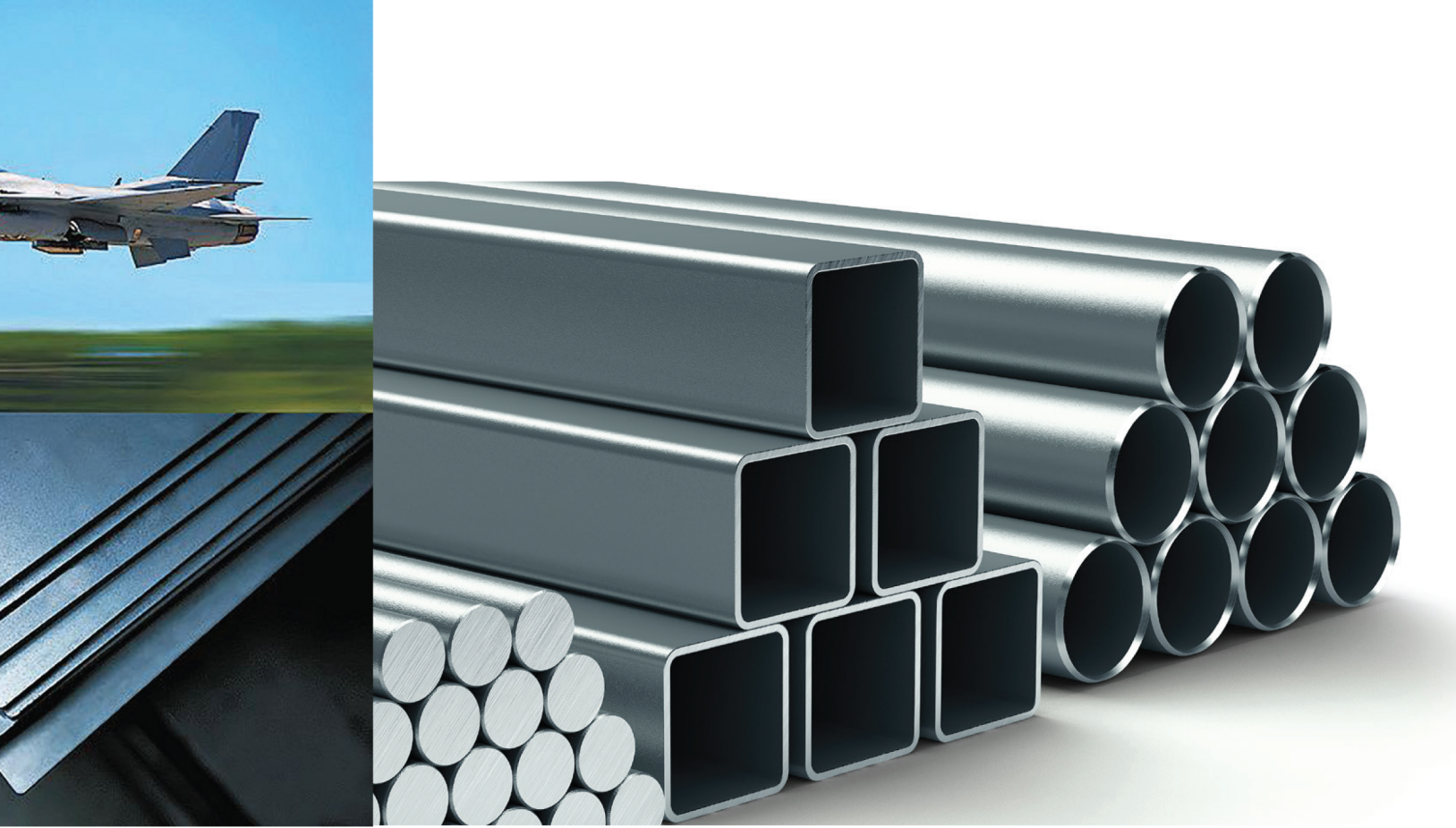
Growth has come quickly for Charleston Aluminum since being founded in 2000. Profiled in the October 2012 edition of Business World Magazine, we caught up with the South Carolina-based national distributor of metal and metal products to find out what's new, exciting and on the horizon.

In October 2012, then-Chief Operating Officer of Charleston Aluminum Dean Blakeney talked about where he saw the company going.

“We want to have more continued growth in the higher value markets,” he told Busi-

ness World at that time. “That growth will be organic growth. We do feel like we have the structure in place for more volume. We think we’re in good shape for where we want to go in the future.”

Nearly three years later and even though



Aerospace Ally

Blakeney is no longer with the company, his forecast continues to come to fruition. Under new management, the same corporate core values and culture of quality and mutual respect that has been instilled from the beginning continue to drive the company. With 63 employees, including 10 in the Miami, Florida office, Charleston Aluminum has an extensive reach and relationship with its workforce. The three warehouses in Gaston – its prime headquarters – houses

142,000 square feet of space, along with an additional 6500 square feet of office space. Considerably smaller, the Miami branch of the company has a combined warehouse and office space of 25,000 square feet.

Backed by a reputation for putting customers first, excellent product and market knowledge that serves a multitude of industries, Charleston Aluminum has added a new level of specialization to their already impressive



offerings. Under the guidance of new Chief Operating Officer Chris Ray, the company is reaching unprecedented standards.

“The company continues to grow, but we’ve added several large aerospace clients to our mix,” Ray said. “With the Boeing plant being in South Carolina and an hour away from us, it just makes sense for us to do more business with them. We’re a gold-rated supplier to Boeing right now, so we’re very proud of that.”

AS9100 CERTIFICATION

Focusing more on the aerospace industry,

Charleston Aluminum has taken measured steps in order to better align themselves with the prime players within that landscape.

“We achieved our AS9100 quality certification in October [2014],” Ray said. “That’s quite an undertaking. The company has been ISO-Certified for a number of years, but AS9100 is the quality standard for companies that specialize in aerospace, which fits us to a T. It was very hard work, and it took effort from everyone in the entire company to achieve it, and we’re very proud of that fact.”

The internationally recognized quality management system, which is strongly



supported and adhered to by major aerospace OEMs is managed by the International Aerospace Quality Group (IAQG), the certification strengthens Charleston's competitive position in the industry. By providing 80 additional requirements and 18 amplifications that are specific to aerospace business operations, the designation standardizes quality, reliability and safety processes across its programs.

"AS9100 certification reflects Charleston Aluminum's commitment to meeting and exceeding the stringent industry requirements for aerospace and defense-related products,"

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Ray said. “This assures our total quality management and service processes consistently meet the requirements and expectations of customer’s presenting the most challenging applications.”

With an inventory comprised of US domestic and western European DFAR producing mills, Charleston Aluminum manufactures aerospace sheet, plate and long products for applications requiring aluminum, stainless, alloy steels and titanium. Becoming one of the largest stocking distributors of aerospace

aluminum in the United States did not happen overnight, however. The shift in focus to aerospace was brought on primarily to changes in the marketplace.

“The market has been very difficult the last couple of years,” Ray said. “Everybody kept thinking that in 2010 the market was going to recover, and it did to some extent, but ever since the financial crash of 2008/2009, we have a new normal now. It’s much harder to make money and be profitable then it was back then. You’ve got to be on top of your

game - you've got to be lean, you've got to operate efficiently and effectively in everything you do."

GROWING PAINS

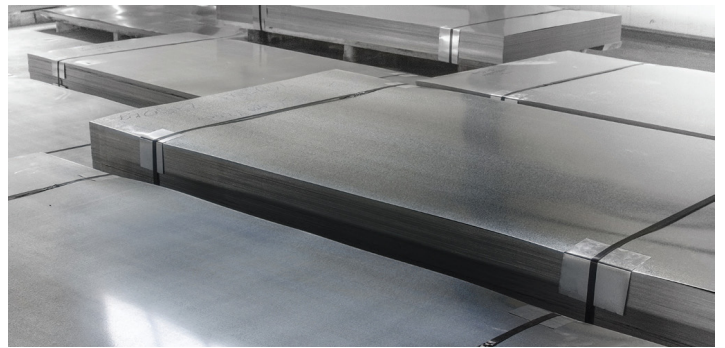
Servicing a nationally and well-recognized set of companies within the industry from the United States to Eastern Canada, Charleston Aluminum has dealt with its share of adversity since they began 15 years ago. And while they are now entrenched within the aerospace industry, Ray detailed his path with the company.

"I was getting ready to move to DC and take a job up there," he said. "Owner Willie Portnoy said 'oh no, you need to come talk to me,' so I came to talk to him and the next day he hired me to be his VP of finance."

"My mission was to bring world class finance and accounting to a company that grew 20% a year for the first six years of its life and was suffering some growing pains," Ray continued. "It was a big challenge because when I got here in 2010, a lot of these people have already been here for 10 years and they have been doing things a certain way so we had to rebuild processes and it was a little bit of a struggle, but we were able to bring world

class accounting to Charleston Aluminum."

Following the departure of Blakeney, Ray's title changed to COO and his responsibilities multiplied ten-fold. Charged with overseeing a variety of aspects within the company – from safety and warehouse operations to customer service and human resources, Ray has become an invaluable asset to the rise at Charleston Aluminum.



"There's just no room for waste or inefficiency in the company, it'll kill you," Ray said. "Our biggest challenge right now is finding additional customers and building the base we have. A couple years ago we decided that we wanted to feature some stuff in aerospace and we wanted to do that and we've been very successful with that."

"Charleston Aluminum is a good company and it's on the verge of becoming a great company," Ray continued. "So we're trying to maintain that momentum to push us forward."

The logo consists of a stylized blue and white symbol resembling a horizontal bar with a notch on the left side.

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