

CARIBBEAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS

OHM a household name

TO MANY in the Caribbean Telecom and Power Utility market, the name OHM International is a household name. Indeed, many years ago, the company first became involved in the Caribbean soon after its founding when it was the materials supplier for an important power transmission line for the Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba.

Now, in 1998 OHM International is celebrating its 40th anniversary, highlighted by the company's receipt of its Certification under the Quality System of ISO 9002: 1994 relating to the supply of electrical apparatus and equipment, telephone and data products, and industrial materials.

It all started in 1958, when OHM was created by an aggressive and experienced group of people from the telecommunications and electrical supply industries.

Involved in the domestic U.S. as well as the international markets, the key to OHM's success was in the realization that they were not a materials supply company as much as they were a service organization. Knowing this, OHM set its internal priorities in a dramatically different fashion than other conventional supply firms.

OHM founder **Peter Gandolfo Sr.**, "OHM International was created as a one stop source for electrical and telecom products. Our focus was to work with the customer to identify their material requirements, and offer whatever level of service they require. Our concept of 'One Source Responsibility' tells the customer we can handle the procurement and logistics of getting material to them. You place the order with OHM, you will get the material delivered to you where you want it at the agreed upon time – the right materials, at the right price, on time, anywhere in the world."

The Early Years

During its early years, OHM's philosophy paid off. OHM quickly expanded both its domestic and international customer bases to include worldwide telephone and electric utilities, petrochemical producers, construction, mining, and industrial concerns by providing a complete package of support services and coordinated materials supply.

However, the rapid growth of its international business soon led to an important decision. Gandolfo recalls, "International and domestic business are fundamentally different. Pretending you could handle them both in the same way, would only lead to an overall drop in service for everyone." With that in mind, OHM made the decision to focus its resources in the international market.

OHM's decision paid off, the U.S. Department of Commerce awarded OHM the Presidential "E" Flag Award for "Excellence In Export" which the company flies over both its U.S.A. locations in Houston and New York. Today, OHM's sphere of business activity runs from the oil fields of Azerbaijan, to the copper fields of Chile and the petrochemical installations of the Asian countries, and just about everywhere in between.

Product expansion was a natural outgrowth of OHM's success, and the breakup of the AT&T monopoly in the U.S. further fuelled its growth. OHM's President, **Peter Gandolfo Jr.** notes: "Our telecommunications sales really took off in the late 70's and have been growing ever since. We now offer a wide range of products such as central office apparatus, subscriber equipment, tower rigging products, cellular and paging items, UPS systems, computer equipment, and outside plant materials which

cover everything from the bottom of the hole to the top of the pole."

Today

OHM emphasizes they are a distributor for the products they sell, not a trading company, says **Vice President John J. Mullins**, "We are in a competitive world marketplace, and while we feel our service is our main selling point, price is also a very important consideration. To keep our prices competitive, we maintain strong relationships with the manufacturers whose products we supply. We consider the manufacturer as important as our customers."

He recalls how one such relationship was put to the test. Several years ago, when Hurricane Gilbert ripped through the Caribbean, Jamaica was heavily damaged. Having supplied distribution materials to the power company there for many years, Mullins was already familiar with their material and was prepared to swing into action when the hurricane hit. One important commodity that Jamaica required was distribution pole-top transformers.

OHM used its excellent factory contacts to come to the rescue with 72 truckloads of pole-top distribution transformers to replace those destroyed. According to Mullins, the transformers were non-standard units that had to be specially manufactured and would normally take three to four months to deliver. Because of the emergency conditions and its good supplier relationships, OHM amazingly was able to airfreight the very first units in two weeks by authorizing the factory to run extra manufacturing shifts to handle the Jamaican emergency.

OHM's involvement in the Caribbean dates back almost 40 years. **Pat Marshall**, OHM's Sales

Manager, handles many of the Telephone Utility accounts throughout the area.

The company's ISO9002 Quality Policy and Mission Statement says it all: "OHM International will serve its customers with enthusiasm and prudence in order to maintain total satisfaction."

Aiming to stay abreast of changing conditions in the export market, the company realizes that times have changed and is taking steps to maximize its effectiveness and competitiveness.

They have added computer equipment, software and connectivity solutions to their product line, and have recently become the exclusive worldwide export marketing arm of Specialty Silicone Products, U.S.A., a manufacturer of space-age-technology, silicone lubricants and compounds for which they are currently seeking distributors in all countries. Further, OHM added to its capabilities by integrating EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) electronic commerce techniques into its operation in 1996, and is an active EDI trading partner with several large international firms.

Operations Manager **Michael Gandolfo** handled the EDI installation. He remarked, "OHM is on the leading edge of commerce, as it will be transacted in the next millennium via EDI. OHM has made an early commitment to electronic commerce technology and is already an active trading partner with several large international firms. We plan to introduce the benefits of this strategic, cost cutting tool to those companies still seeking more information on this topic."

OHM is now making plans to broaden its exposure even further in the Caribbean market. The company can also be visited on the Internet at www.ohminternational.com