

# Homegrown Blount International Remains on Industry's Cutting Edge

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If you work in Oregon, there's a good chance your job is linked to trade, as it's one of the most trade dependent states in the nation.

In this interview, Scott Koepping with Blount International, Inc., explains how free and fair trade is critical for growing their business in all corners of the world, and outlines their approach to success for more than 70 years.

### **What do you do at Blount International?**

Blount International is a global manufacturer and marketer of replacement parts, equipment, and accessories for the forestry, lawn, and garden; farm, ranch, and agriculture; and concrete cutting and finishing markets. We employ more than 3,500 Team Members in 20 locations spanning 11 countries, including manufacturing facilities in the United States, Canada, Brazil, China, and France. We sell our products in more than 110 countries around the world, primarily under the Oregon®, Carlton®, Woods®, SpeeCo®, and KOX® brands.

Each year, we are capable of making approximately 220 million feet of saw chain, 15 million guide bars, 15 million lawnmower blades, more than 100,000 log splitters, and more than 50,000 rotary cutter and finish mowers.

As global transportation and trade compliance manager, I establish systems, standards, and procedures to optimize Blount International's global transportation network.

### **How did you get started?**

We began in 1947, when the Oregon Saw Chain Company was founded by Joe Cox in Portland, Oregon. Joe developed the modern saw chain design from the basement of his home after viewing how efficiently timber beetle larva chewed through wood fiber. His invention revolutionized the timber harvesting industry and helped shape us into the thriving business we are today.

### **What's the most exciting part of your business?**

The most exciting part of our business is designing and manufacturing innovative products that satisfy our customers' unmet needs. Whether on the job site, in the forest, or the field, our products maximize productivity, quality, and safety, helping our customers get their job done right. In 2018, we will be launching new saw chain and guide bar, cordless outdoor power equipment, and a single phase electric concrete cutting saw – products that are truly cutting edge in the industry.

### **What challenges do you face as an international business?**

Over the last few years, one of the most challenging factors has been fluctuations in foreign currency markets and the strengthening of the U.S. dollar. These trends made our products seem more expensive to our customers in some countries. Also, maintaining free and fair trade throughout the world is critical for our business as we source materials from around the globe and then move finished products to the markets in which they are ultimately sold.

## **What should Oregonians know about why trade matters so much to our state?**

Blount is proud to support manufacturing jobs across the country, and we are especially proud to call Oregon our home. We trace our roots in the Portland-Milwaukie area back to 1947. Equipment manufacturers in Oregon support over 180,000 jobs across the state and contribute nearly \$50 billion to our economy. Free and fair trade allows our business to grow in all corners of the world.

## **What's your business vision for the future?**

Over the last several years, our strategy has been based on three core initiatives: Customer Connection, Operational Excellence, and High Performance Organization. This strategy is working and is helping to protect our market position and grow our business. Looking forward, we are investing in three primary growth avenues: new products, eCommerce, and geographic expansion. We are excited about our investments in these areas and believe that they will generate growth and strengthen our business for the long term.