

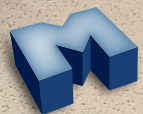
# memphis CROSSROADS

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# Manufacturing



## A HISTORY OF PERSEVERANCE: Jordan Aluminum Company Prepares for Growth

By Jon W. Sparks

Jordan Aluminum Company has a long history of creating and supplying everything from lumber to doors and windows. And since 1896, it's been adjusting to demand, weathering rough years and making the most of favorable times.

Today, the manufacturer is aiming high with the acquisition of a new Presezzi extrusion press that will nearly triple its capacity and allow it to seek out new markets.

For decades after its founding, Jordan was a wholesale/retail lumber and millwork company. In 1961, it started manufacturing aluminum windows, storm doors and wood door units. It got into the aluminum extrusion business in 1979 when it installed a press that launched the company into a period of impressive growth.

In 2007, revenues were around \$90 million, a result of Jordan providing windows and doors for the nation's booming new home construction industry.

And then 2008 happened.

The economic downturn brought the construction industry to its knees and Jordan's revenues dropped to \$30 million. The Jordan Window and Door Co. put its assets up for sale. Chuck Smith, owner and president of National Guard Products, an architectural door accessory company, reached a deal and what emerged was the Jordan Aluminum Extrusion Co.

Keith Rayburn, who came to the company two years ago as general manager, says it was a struggle for extrusion companies everywhere and many did not survive. But Jordan worked smart. "It was developing a name and growing the business with hard work and perseverance in the industry," he said. "The ownership made sure everyone was working in the same direction." The company's volume grew and it gained a reputation for delivery and service. By 2012, it had added a shift and was showing a small profit.

"At first the company was worried about keeping the lights on (after the downturn), but volume grew as Jordan's reputation for delivery grew," said Lewie Smith,

Jordan's president. He and his brother Foster acquired the company from their father last year. "We were working one or two days a week at first and shifting focus from the residential side to the commercial. Volume built back up and in 2012, we invested in an anodize line – the anodizing process is a surface finish that makes aluminum more durable and corrosion resistant."

The company was experiencing more demand, Smith said. "After 2015, we got to a point where we could make a business case to invest in a new press and it would be a game changer," he said. "We had the vintage 1980 model, but today's presses are more energy efficient, more automated and give a wider range of aluminum alloys."

The varieties of alloys Jordan will be able to process with the Presezzi are stronger and can meet tighter tolerances, opening up new opportunities in consumer durables, electrical and automotive areas.

"Lewie and I visited Presezzi and other companies before making the decision," Rayburn said. "The company has a reputation for its equipment and it's experienced in installation."

The \$8 million project will allow Jordan to increase its capacity from the current 14 million pounds a year to 40 million pounds a year. Rayburn expects that the company's 90-member workforce will also need to increase.

The plan is to take delivery of the press in mid-November and have a test run in mid-to-late December. "After the new year, we start formal training of operators and maintenance technicians," Rayburn said. "Everyone has to go through the training since it has automation the old press doesn't have."

Jordan's plant, meanwhile, is getting a makeover to accommodate the new press, including digging in the floor and redoing part of the roof.

And the company's eye is fixed on the future.

"I see us being at full capacity with both presses and pursuing other opportunities," Rayburn said. One area that the greater capacity will allow Jordan to get into is increasing its trade zone. "Most of what we do is shipped within 250 miles of here, but if we're going to grow to 40 million pounds, we have to expand to new markets."

Lewie Smith added, "This is such a massive change and investment that our plan for the next few years is to not change our business model since we're changing so much on the production side. We can run our business more efficiently, cleaner, generate some cash flow, pay down some debt and look at a whole host of new markets."