

Big pickup scheduled in Depew

BUFFALO MATERIALS HANDLING IS ON THE MOVE WITH NEW OWNER

BY ALLISSA KLINE

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Peter Tunkey figured there was nowhere to go but up when he bought Buffalo Materials Handling in 2010.

The economy wasn't exactly roaring, but the Western New York native bet on the fact that selling an extensive line of materials handling equipment and services – think forklifts, dock levelers, pallet racking, cranes and conveyors – was a pretty stable gig.

And it helped that he would be backed by a team of employees who knew the ins and outs of the business.

“It was a great win-win for me,” said Tunkey, who is the third owner of the 59-year-old company. “They were in the trenches and they knew the business and I didn't. I was told once that to be a successful business owner, I should surround myself with smart people and I was lucky to be able to do that.”

Located in Depew, Buffalo Materials Handling lost money for 10 consecutive years before Tunkey purchased it in June 2010 for an undisclosed price. Now it's on track to close \$8 million in sales this year, more than twice as much as 2009, Tunkey said.

Under his leadership, the company has expanded into other warehouse material items including floor scrubbers, sweepers and stretch wrappers. Employment has risen from 14 to 28, in part because of new contracts with companies



JIM COURTNEY

No. 68: Peter Tunkey's decision to buy Buffalo Materials Handling was driven by his desire to own a small business. Four years later, he's doubled the company's sales and number of employees, adding products and workers in order to boost business.

such as Walmart, Home Depot and Tops Friendly Markets, he said.

Now he's thinking about physical expansion, too. The company occupies a large sales and service facility on Taylor Drive, but Tunkey wants to open additional offices in light of new business secured in Rochester and the Southern Tier.

“We've expanded quite a bit in those areas, so the next step is to have brick-and-mortar offic-

es there,” he said. “We are actively looking at locations in Jamestown, so we expect to have a location there by next summer.”

The service side of his business is just as important as sales, he said. In fact, service makes up about 25 percent of the business.

“It's one thing to be able to sell a forklift, but if you can service the customer, that's a differentiator,” Tunkey said.

► BUFFALO MATERIALS HANDLING

- **Rank:** 68
- **CEO/owner:** Peter Tunkey
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buffalomaterialshandling.com
- **Established:** 1956
- **2013 sales:** \$6.53 million