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## Adding Anodizing Capacity


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# Chicago-Based Anodizer Doubles Capacity, Enhancing Technology

Chicago Anodizing Co. recently completed a major renovation, increasing its capacity for hardcoat anodizing and Type II anodizing.

BY SCOTT FRANCIS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Based in the West Side area of Chicago since 1947, Chicago Anodizing Co. (CAC) — a third-generation, family-owned metal finishing business — has emphasized the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships as a key strategy for business growth. Throughout its 77-year history, CAC has remained successful by investing in its workforce, fostering strong partnerships and consistently embracing the adoption of new technologies. The company provides finishing and related services for a variety of industries, including automotive, aerospace, medical, electronics, construction and infrastructure.

CAC has more than 70,000 square feet of facility space with two full-service anodizing lines and a full-service bright dip line,

ABOVE: Anodized parts recently coming out of the CAC tanks — the newly renovated east line comprises 54 tanks in a U-shape configuration. Source (all photos): Chicago Anodizing Co.

and is capable of providing anodizing in more than 25 in-house custom colors. The company specializes in Type II (sulfuric) and Type III (hardcoat) anodizing, known for durability and wear resistance, as well as aluminum chromate conversion coatings, barrel and bulk anodizing, and bright dip anodizing. The company's certifications include MIL-A-8625 for Type II and III anodizing, MIL-DTL-5541 for conversion coatings, and AAMA 600 and AAMA 611 for architectural work.

CAC aims to be a one-stop finishing shop for its customers and uses its expertise in a variety of markets to offer value-added services for specific programs. In addition to its core offerings, the company offers pre- and post-anodizing services, such as mechanical finishing, polishing, buffing, laser marking, assembly and inventory management.

The company's belief in continuous improvement led to its most recent investment — a comprehensive renovation of its east line, a move aimed at boosting production capacity



and improving operational efficiency. *Products Finishing* recently spoke with CAC President John Serritella to hear the details of this extensive project and its implications for the company's business and its customers.

### Expansion and modernization

CAC set out to transform its east line from a single-hoist operating line to a four-hoist system, doubling the company's capacity for hardcoat anodizing and Type II anodizing. The renovation, which

CAC's updated facility features advanced technology, including automated controls and bilingual displays to assist operators.



CAC's new east line was renovated from a single-hoist operating line to a four-hoist system, doubling the company's capacity.

began in November and was completed in early January, involved a complete overhaul of the existing infrastructure, as well as upgrades to the existing equipment. The project included new foundations, cement work and a state-of-the-art ventilation system with a 60,000-CFM (cubic feet per minute) capacity, along with matching makeup air units. All new trolleys, hoist lines and refrigeration equipment were installed, ensuring the facility operates at peak efficiency.

"We took everything down to the bones and started over," Serritella says. "We installed new polypropylene tanks, carry bars and everything we could think of to ensure we had the best possible setup."

The resulting east line now boasts 54 tanks (previously the line comprised 31 tanks), organized in a U-shape rather than the previous linear setup. This expansion also includes seven new dye tanks, enabling CAC to offer a wider range of colors in addition to traditional clear and black anodized finishes.

"We've doubled our capacity with hardcoat anodizing and Type II anodizing," Serritella says. "With the additional tanks, we can now offer a broader spectrum of colors, enhancing our service offerings significantly."

### A smooth transition

While the renovation was a massive undertaking and despite the extensive work, CAC managed to maintain operations throughout the project. Serritella credits careful planning by CAC's team of mechanics and General Manager Victor Orihuela along with

customer collaboration as the keys to this continuity. The company utilized its west line to handle as much overflow as possible and recommended alternative providers to customers whenever necessary.

**“Our strong partnerships allowed us to navigate this period smoothly.”**

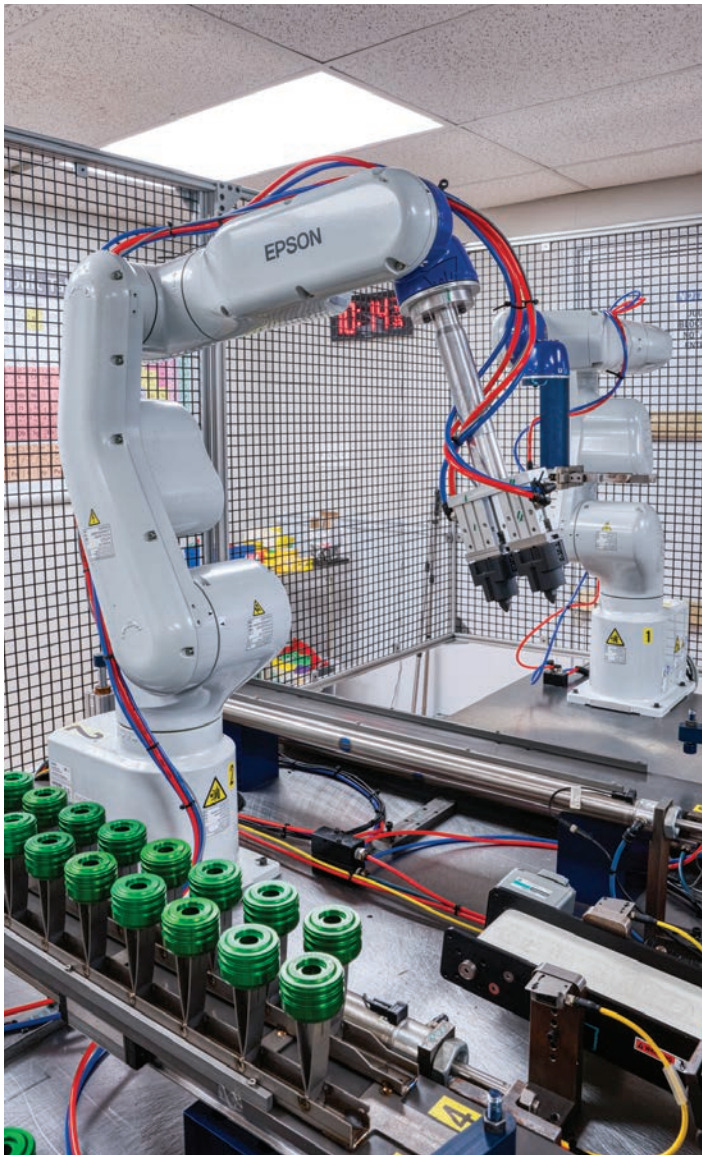
This approach ensured minimal disruption and maintained strong customer relationships.

“Our customers understood the need for the shutdown of the line, and we worked closely with them to ensure they weren’t negatively impacted,” Serritella says. “Our strong

partnerships allowed us to navigate this period smoothly.”

The renovation was supported by several key partners and

**CAC has invested heavily in additional robotic automation for racking and unranking for high volume and specific racking areas on critical parts.**



equipment providers. Local firm Aldonex Inc. (Bellwood, Ill.) supplied the rectifiers, RK Inc. (West Plains, Mo.) provided the tanks and Chicago-based Eagle Plastic Services Inc. contributed essential materials. The refrigeration equipment came from Camac Industries in New Jersey, while AMS handled the HVAC installation, and Hayes Boiler supplied the new, more powerful 200-hp steam boiler system.

### Strategic growth

The renovation is part of a broader strategy to position CAC for future growth. The company has recently acquired Stutz Co., a Chicago-based chemical manufacturing and distribution firm, enhancing vertical integration and ensuring a stable supply of essential chemicals. The acquisition aligns with the company’s focus on consistent quality and long-term customer relationships.

“We’re very fortunate to have a strong customer base that values our commitment to quality and innovation,” Serritella says. “This renovation and our recent acquisition demonstrate our dedication to serving our customers’ evolving needs.”

### Technology and workforce development

The updated facility features advanced technology, including automated controls and bilingual displays to assist operators. The company has also expanded its robotic capabilities and laser marking capabilities, with six robotic cells and seven lasers now in operation, and plans to add more.

This investment in technology is complemented by a focus on workforce development, with increased staff and cross-training initiatives. “Our employees are our greatest asset,” Serritella emphasized. “We invest in their development and ensure they have the tools and training needed to succeed.”

CAC maintains a staff of around 85 employees with an average tenure of 22 years and was able to maintain staffing levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. Serritella says investments in automation aim to enhance work quality and provide better compensation for employees.

### A commitment to the future

CAC’s focus on relationships includes both internal (employees) and external (customers and partners) stakeholders. By nurturing these relationships and staying technologically adept, the company has been able to sustain and grow its operations over the decades.

As Chicago Anodizing celebrates over 75 years in business, the recent renovations and strategic investments underscore the company’s commitment to its employees, customers and the industry. With a strong leadership team, including Serritella’s sons and experienced managers, the company is well positioned for continued success.

In addition, the company has community outreach initiatives to educate and recruit from high schools, community colleges and universities. Focuses on internships and educational opportunities also help foster new talent in the finishing industry.

“We’re poised for the future,” Serritella says. “Our investments in technology and our people ensure we can meet the needs of our customers and continue to grow.” ■■■