

A SALUTE TO A CUSTOMER



WENDLING QUARRIES, INC.

How a “customer-first” attitude helps this growing aggregate producer remain an industry leader



Tony Manatt, Owner and General Manager of Wendling Quarries, Inc.

To a lot of people, quarry work involves turning big rocks into little rocks. That, of course, is not wrong. But for a company like Wendling Quarries, Inc., it only tells a small part of the story.

Wendling Quarries has a large number of quarry operations throughout eastern Iowa and western Illinois, and is one of the leading crushed limestone, sand and gravel producers in the Midwest. The company also has an asphalt plant, a Ready-Mix concrete plant, and does asphalt recycling, custom crushing and survey work. In addition, Wendling does custom drilling and prospecting for itself, for other companies and for governmental entities.

“We’ve diversified a lot over the years,” said Tony Manatt, Owner and General Manager of Wendling Quarries. “And the main reason for continually adding to our list of services is to help us better meet the needs of our customers. If a customer wants us to do

something for him, you can bet that we’re going to do our best to find a way to accommodate him. We call it a ‘customer-first’ attitude and that’s really been the key to our success.”

Top-notch people

While it may not be unusual for the head of a company to feel like that, Manatt says the great thing about Wendling is that employees share the attitude.

“I really can’t say enough about our employees. It’s definitely a team effort. Everybody’s job is important and one of us doesn’t succeed without the other. Our best estimator looks bad if our oiler doesn’t do his job—but the oiler doesn’t have a job if the estimator’s not performing well. We don’t have a lot of titles or hierarchy here. We try to empower all of our people to be decision-makers and we feel like we have top-notch people at all levels.”

About 200 people work at Wendling Quarries. The management team includes Administrative Manager Ron Lehne, Quarry Development Director Marc Whitman, Production Superintendent Steve Yerington, Safety Director Dan Darland, Quality Control Director Dave Schau and Equipment Manager Hollis Emerson.

“We work hard, but we also try to have some fun along the way,” said Manatt. “There’s a lot of ribbing back and forth, but when it comes down to it, if somebody needs help, he knows he can count on the guy next to him. There’s a friendship and a dedication to one another that’s an important aspect of why we go to work. Even though we’ve gotten to be a good-sized company, it’s a family atmosphere here and that’s something we certainly never want to lose.”

Company history

That family atmosphere probably stems from the fact that Wendling is a family-owned business. Tony, a brother and two cousins are second-generation partners in Manatt’s Inc., one of Iowa’s largest general contracting/road building firms, which acquired



This Komatsu WA600 wheel loader equipped with Komatsu’s innovative K VX tooth system for hard rock digging, is being used to stockpile rock at Wendling’s quarry in Moscow, Iowa. Wendling Quarries’ heavy equipment fleet includes seven Komatsu wheel loaders from RMS.



The operator of a 44-ton capacity Komatsu HD325-6 rigid-frame haul truck dumps shot rock into a hopper at Wendling's Springville crushing operation.

Wendling Quarries in 1987. Since then, the Manatts have expanded the quarry operations considerably.

"Back in the early days of Manatt's, Inc., my dad used to worry about getting enough work to pay for the four or five employees they had at that time," Tony recalled. "That's something we've never forgotten. We're very proud of the fact that our companies provide a lot of good jobs for a lot of good people and it's a responsibility we take very seriously."

"We're also working hard to carry on the reputation that my dad and his brothers built through the years," he added. "When we shake hands on a deal and give our word, you can take it to the bank that we're going to stand behind it. We try to treat everybody fairly and honestly—and while our customers are our top priority—we also consider many of our competitors to be good friends."

Safety is number one

As might be expected from a company that prizes its employees the way Wendling Quarries does, safety is the company's top priority at all times.

"There are three things that we emphasize in crushing rock," said Manatt. "We want to always produce a quality product. We want to produce it quickly, efficiently and profitably. But most of all, we want to produce it safely. To us, it doesn't matter how fast we crush rock or how well we crush it—if we're hurting people when we do it, it's not worth being in business. That's why we do everything we can to ensure that all of our employees go home safely each night."



Springville Plant Manager Russell Heinsius is pictured with the Komatsu HD325-6 truck and the tunnel at the quarry site in the background at center. In 1998, Heinsius and Wendling crews constructed the 686-foot tunnel that helped connect the crushing site south of Highway 151 with property north of the road. Operators of the 488-horsepower Komatsu truck, which was acquired from RMS last year, use the tunnel to move material from north of the road to the crushing spread on the south side of Highway 151. The total haul length is almost a mile.

To that end, Wendling Quarries meets and exceeds all MSHA safety requirements. The company has CPR-trained personnel at all sites, whether or not it's required. It has toolbox talks/safety briefings each morning. It also trains people, not just when they're hired, but periodically throughout the year.

"Our position is that every accident is preventable," said Manatt. "That's why we also report and closely monitor all accidents and near-accidents. Then each month, our safety director meets with production managers and myself to go over what happened and why, in an effort to resolve the issue so we can do better the next time."

Partners in production

One of the prerequisites for working safely and productively is good equipment. That's why Wendling Quarries turns to Road Machinery & Supplies Co. for much of its equipment needs.

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Wendling takes pride in its people

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Delane Wolter, left, RMS Territory Manager, with Hollis Emerson, Equipment Manager for Wendling Quarries

"They do an excellent job of providing us with the machines and the support we need to be successful in what has become a very competitive industry," said Manatt. "We consider RMS to be one of our partners in this business and we know we can count on our territory manager Delane Wolter and RMS president Mike Sill II to be there for us when we need them."

"RMS has an excellent equipment inventory, which is good for us when we need to rent a machine on short notice," said Equipment Manager Hollis Emerson. "They also respond quickly to any support needs we have."

Wendling's fleet includes seven Komatsu wheel loaders (two WA600s and five WA450s), a Komatsu PC200LC-6 hydraulic excavator and a 44-ton Komatsu HD325 rigid-frame haul truck.

"We've had excellent production, reliability and longevity from our Komatsu machines," said Emerson. "Some of the loaders are more than ten years old and have more than 15,000 hours on them and they're still running and producing every day with original engines and transmissions."

"We've also been very impressed with the Komatsu excavator," added Manatt. "We have a hammer on it and it's been very productive. I'd say it's exceeded our expectations and outperforms competitive units we have. It's really opened our eyes to the quality of Komatsu excavators."

Wendling also has a Tamrock Panterra 1100 rock drill and four Load King trailers from RMS—as well as four Dresser 560 wheel loaders that date back to the early 1970s and which Emerson says "still produce for us on a daily basis."

Future looks bright

While there are plenty of challenges to overcome in the short-term future, Manatt says he's optimistic about where the company is headed. "The main problems we face have to do with funding. But we all know there's a lot of infrastructure work that needs to be done, and eventually, the money to pay for it will have to be found."

In the meantime, Wendling Quarries has positioned itself to be ready to provide the aggregate that the construction industry needs when that time comes. "Something we've really concentrated on over the last four or five years is becoming much more technologically advanced and progressive as a company," said Manatt. "We've invested heavily in computers and computer training for our people because we always want to be on the cutting edge and we really feel like we're setting the bar for our industry at this time in terms of innovation."

And while Wendling Quarries is already highly diversified, Manatt says the company will continue to look for ways to expand the business in the future. "We have internal committees working on market research and product development, looking for any niches we may be able to fill. So, continued growth is definitely part of our plan—and with the talent and energy that we have throughout our workforce—I'm very optimistic that we'll be able to achieve it."



ABOVE: Randy Rowan uses a Tamrock Pantera 1100 rock drill to drill blast holes at Wendling's Robins quarry. RIGHT: Veteran drill operators Randy Fisher, left, and Randy Rowan stand next to the Tamrock Pantera 1100 drill that Wendling Quarries added to its equipment fleet this past March. Fisher and Rowan have many years of experience operating drills and both joined the Wendling team in 1990.

