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Top 100: Meet Highline Warren, the billion-dollar Memphis company no one knows

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As I spoke to [Darcy Curran](#), president and CEO of Highline Warren, I had a confession to make: Before being assigned the story, I had never heard of his company.

“Well, nobody has,” Curran responded, laughing. “We’re the biggest company nobody has ever heard of.”

A lack of public familiarity, though, hasn’t stopped Highline Warren from growing in size and scope.

In 2020, the Memphis-based company raked in nearly \$1.2 billion. It has about 225 employees locally and 1,700 nationally, numbers that are poised to only go up. Since 2016, it’s acquired seven businesses, and has 27 facilities in North America, including a 300,000-square-foot distribution center in Memphis.



COURTESY HIGHLINE WARREN | SEAN KILGUS

All of this begs the question, then: What exactly does Highline Warren do?

On shelves and online

A major manufacturer and distributor of automotive aftermarket consumable products — think oil, RV antifreeze, windshield wiper fluid, etc. — Highline Warren has a variety of components to its business.

The company makes private label versions of its offerings for some of the largest auto, non-auto, and online retailers in the country, meaning that it makes and sells the products to clients, which then brand them as their own.

And, it owns brands, too, such as Prime Guard, BlueDevil Products, Mag1, and Service Champ. According to Curran, it's also the only company in North America licensed to make Rain-X windshield washer fluid.

"Every single jug of [Rain-X] in America," he said, "we made the bottle, we filled it up, and we sold it."

Beyond this, Highline Warren buys and redistributes products of national brands, including Shell, Mobil, and Lucas Oil.

"That's part of what makes us unique," Curran said. "The vertical integration between our manufacturing and distribution."

Bolstering this manufacturing-distribution one-two punch is the company's strategic placement of its properties. Highline Warren operates 12 manufacturing plants and 15 distribution centers.

The manufacturing facilities, Curran said, are within 300 miles of the distribution centers of the U.S.' major retailers. Separately, its own distribution centers can deliver to 99% of the country in one to two days.

All of this, of course, poses another question: Just how did Highline Warren reach this point?

Highline + Warren = Highline Warren

Back in 2016, Houston-based Sterling Group, a middle-market private equity firm, formed Highline Aftermarket through the simultaneous acquisitions of Automotive Aftermarket Holdings Corp. and DYK Automotive — the latter of which was previously owned by Memphis-based Dobbs Management Service.

The Sterling Group brought in Curran as president and CEO and decided to headquarter the business here, in part because of its workforce and the presence of shipping companies like FedEx.

“We found Memphis to be a very welcoming and accommodating partner for us, as we grew the business,” Curran said.

By November 2020, the company had 500 employees, 15 distribution centers, and eight manufacturing facilities. But, those numbers were about to increase, and dramatically so.

That month, Highline was acquired by Pritzker Private Capital (PPC), which, at the same time, purchased the Nebraska-based, private-label oil manufacturer Warren Distribution.

Already, the two companies were familiar with each other, as Highline and Warren had worked together previously and sold different products to many of the same customers.

As the new owner of both, PPC decided to merge the two, creating Highline Warren, a company roughly double the size. The new entity’s headquarters remains in Memphis.

“The vision that Pritzker Private Capital had, when they put Highline and Warren together, created immediate and explosive growth,” Curran said. “When Highline and Warren were put together, we had the opportunity to sell more to existing customers, and find new customers. [And that opportunity] has far exceeded our expectations.”

So, we know the company’s size, what it does, and how it was formed, which leaves just one more question: What’s next?

Just getting started

Highline Warren’s growth potential, Curran believes, is staggering. He acknowledges that, right now, problems in the supply chain

have created challenges, and hiring talented workers as the company grows has been difficult.

To lure employees in, Curran said, the organization offers competitive wages and benefits, bonuses, and upward mobility opportunities.

He considers these challenges, however, to be short-term issues for a company well-positioned for long-term growth. And five years from now, Curran expects the company to be earning more than \$2 billion annually.

Some of this growth will come from more acquisitions. For the foreseeable future, Highline Warren plans on purchasing two to three companies a year, likely among its regional competitors. Recently, it acquired the diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) division of Sapp Bros., a gas station and convenience store chain.

Growth could also come from increased business with e-commerce sites. Right now, the company serves as the fulfillment partner for multiple sites, selling them roughly \$50 million in products a year.

In five years, Curran expects that dollar amount to be in the hundreds of millions.

“If I can get to the entire U.S. in one to two days, and have 12 manufacturing plants,” Curran said, “we should be the logical fulfillment partner for e-commerce businesses.”

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