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[www.almh.com](http://www.almh.com) / HQ: Rock Island, Ill. / Employees: 19 / Specialty: Positioning / Kevin Toft, president: "One of the big things that sets us apart is our ability to respond to our customers' needs."



ALM DESIGNS ALL OF ITS POSITIONERS TO MAXIMIZE SPACE IN CUSTOMERS' FACILITIES.

## PRIME POSITION

ALM POSITIONERS' NAMESAKE PRODUCTS GIVE HEAVY EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS A BIG ASSIST. BY JIM HARRIS

**One of the biggest challenges** faced by the makers of heavy equipment is the sheer size of the products or components they make. Bracing and moving large equipment during welding, assembly and other manufacturing processes can be too daunting – or even dangerous – for a person or people to try to do themselves.

For the past 15 years, ALM Positioners has specialized in giving manufacturers a hand, figuratively speaking, when it comes to holding large machines.

"We work with large companies and small factories that do custom work," explains Kevin Toft, president of the Rock Island, Ill., compa-

ny. "We work with the people who build things."

The company designs, engineers and manufactures single- and multi-column positioner lifts used to lift, rotate or turn equipment. ALM's positioners are used by manufacturers serving the mining, agriculture, construction and other industries.

ALM started in 1982 as an importer of heavy automotive lifts from Europe, but began manufacturing material-handling lifts on its own beginning in the early 1990s. One of ALM's biggest customers was heavy equipment manufacturer Caterpillar, which approached it about building positioners in 2002. Since then, posi-

tioners have become the company's main focus, though it still manufactures material-handling equipment, Toft says. ALM Positioners was acquired in 2015 and relocated to its new, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Rock Island.

### SMALL BUT FLEXIBLE

With 19 employees working from a single 24,000-square-foot manufacturing site in Rock Island, ALM is smaller than many of its competitors. "There are others who do what we do but not the same way we do," Toft says. "Our competitors' equipment tends to be larger, heavier and more expensive, while ours is designed for a smaller footprint."

The company's size also gives it greater flexibility in its work with customers. "One of the big things that sets us apart is our ability to respond to our customers' needs," he adds.

A recent example of ALM's ability to meet a customer's specification involved the company designing a positioner that could be used to build a yacht hull. "When the customer approached us with the idea, they told us that other companies told them this couldn't be done," Toft explains. "We believed it was possible, and were able to do it."

All of the positioners developed by the company are designed to maximize space. "Factory floor space is becoming an issue in the industry, but no one wants to build larger factories if they don't have to," he adds. "If we can help companies get usable floor space back, that's a big plus for them."

ALM's positioners are also designed to work quickly. "We can get a weldment in position as fast as is possible," Toft says. "As far as we know, our positioners' elevation is faster than anyone else's on the market."



### A FULL SOLUTION

ALM manufactures several lines of positioning equipment that it can modify according to customers' request. Positioners are typically built to order, though the company keeps a small inventory on hand for distributors to display in showrooms.

The company's in-house manufacturing capabilities include panel building, painting, fabrication and assembly. Manufacturing processes such as laser bending and plasma cutting are performed off site by partners including GE Mathis, who forms the metal columns used in ALM's positioning equipment.

ALM recently expanded its panel building and other capabilities when it built an expansion to its manufacturing facility, Toft says.

All of ALM's positioners are fully inspected and tested. The company can also perform a full demonstration of its equipment on site for customers. "We can provide customers with a full turnkey solution," he adds. "When our customers take delivery, they are getting exactly what they expect."

### GETTING NOTICED

Although still a small company, ALM Positioners has seen a significant increase in sales within the past five years. Toft attributes this growth to its entry into new markets including aerospace, defense and military manufacturing.

"We've expanded our footprint with our distributor network and our direct salesforce, and have worked to build our brand," he says. "We have been able to get people to notice us."

Developing and marketing new products is one way the company is getting noticed. ALM Positioners unveiled

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a new servo-controlled robotic trunnion during the FABTECH trade show in Las Vegas in 2016. Other new products under development include machines with fully programmable controls.

Toft attributes the company's success to the work of its staff. "We have a great group of people who take a lot of pride in their work, and that is reflected whenever we have a customer come through our facility. Many of our customers tell us about the positive energy they get from our group," Toft says. "We've hired a very good group of people that is talented and driven, and that is rare to find." **mt**

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866.388.6744  
www.rjcyliner.com  
2155 Progress Street + Dover, Ohio 44622