

August 25, 2021

44 Years of Service with Rick Calhoun

Rick Calhoun has achieved 44 years and 10 months of service at Americhem moving his way up from working in the samples group in the customer service lab to his current role as Senior Field Service Technician at Headquarters. He was hired on October 18, 1976 after working at the Firestone Rubber Company in their computer center while in college. Rick has done it all from managing 32 direct reports to starting the packaging color group to becoming the very first field service technician.

To celebrate Americhem's 80 year anniversary, Rick was kind enough to be interviewed as one of Americhem's longest tenured employees. The dialogue was as follows:

What was the field of plastics like when you first started?

For Americhem, we were still pretty new in the industry. We only had 2 plants at the time: Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio and Elgin, Illinois. There were about 100 employees total split between the 2 locations. Rick Mathew was my mentor from the very beginning; he still calls me every year on my birthday to catch up and I am so grateful for him.

What were some of the biggest challenges back then?

You can't learn what Americhem does through school and/or college; it's all on the job training. When I was hired at 21 years old, I latched onto the experienced people here because they had so much knowledge to share and ultimately taught me everything I know today. The long tenured employees at Americhem do a tremendous job cross training the younger people in the organization to give them a chance at advancing.

What changes have you seen in plastics?

In the mid to late 80's in automotive, there was a lot of money to be made. Now, automotive has become much more demanding and strict tolerances for suppliers.



Picture 1: Rick winning multiple awards at the 2002 annual Sales Meeting. He won the "Highest Field Service Productivity" award that year.

What have been the greatest developments in the field of plastics over the last 44 years?

Back then, 90% of a vehicle was made from ABS and was usually painted. Now, we have evolved to coloring materials like PP and PC/ABS. In 2015, Ford came out with an aluminum body F150 and the whole strategy behind it was to save on gas mileage by light-weighting the vehicle.

From your perspective, what would you say are Americhem's greatest accomplishments?

We're not just good at automotive products anymore; we're great in a lot of industries. We have major technology advantages in areas such as building & construction, medical, and fibers.

In your opinion, is there anything that Americhem should have done differently?

After almost 45 years, I can't say that any decision has ever upset me. All of the acquisitions and expansions have been really well thought out and aligned with our core values and/or technologies. Even the companies we've acquired that have different offerings or expertise than us, have complimented our global portfolio perfectly.

What are some of your fondest Americhem memories?

Not that it is a fond memory, but it is certainly a memory worth telling. You know how everyone remembers exactly where they were when 911 happened? Well, I was in Mexico visiting a customer and I got stuck there because they closed the border. 911 happened on a Tuesday and by Friday, they reopened the border and we got the first flight out, but our bus to the airport blew a tire on the way. We ended up flagging down another bus that was headed to the border, but they weren't allowed to take us across because we weren't on their roster. They allowed us onboard, but we had to be dropped off with our luggage and walk across the border along the Rio Grande River. That's an experience I'll never forget.

What are the key issues that you see Americhem addressing in the future?

Competition. We've entered into so many new markets that are highly competitive. Although, Americhem does have a major one-up on competitors: our field service technicians are second to none. Americhem has always seen value in field service and we truly do more in the field for our customers than any other company I have ever seen. I've visited a lot of customers over the years and they've consistently told me that they've never seen such dedicated field service from a supplier and that we are more of a partner to them than anything else.

Please share one memory of a funny situation that you encountered at Americhem.

Ron Beck used to live across the street from Americhem. He had a very small car at the time, so on our lunch break, we went across the street and took the engine out of his car and put it in his living room.



Picture 2: Rick Calhoun, 2021.

Describe what Americhem means to you.

Americhem means loyalty; they have been loyal to me and I have given my loyalty back to them. Rick Juve, the 2nd generation family owner, came to my family member's funeral. He came up to my dad, shook his hand, and told him what a truly valued employee I am to the company. I'll hold that memory with me for the rest of my life.

Thank you Rick for your endless commitment to Americhem and your timeless friendship to many of us. We wish you continued success in your long standing career and look forward to your ongoing positivity you spread across the company.