

## U.S.-Made Storage Vendors Maintain Production

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LEOMINSTER, MA— The plastic storage category includes stalwart Made in the USA players who have experienced COVID-19 related challenges this year but continue to thrive.

As with other American manufacturers, they have been subject to health-related difficulties that have slowed down and even halted production, but they've managed to roll with the punches and continue to maintain production as the

coronavirus crisis has proceeded. Even in doing so, they continue working to identify and adapt to consumer lifestyle changes, which have made storage a more important consideration for households where a greater range of activities is happening in the home. With movement restrictions, the focus of activity in the home has created a particular situation where consumers are conducting more professional and leisure activities in the limited space. So, storage has been important to keeping the extra activity orderly.

Headquartered and manufacturing in Townsend, MA, Sterilite operates additional plants as far west as Arizona, with warehouse space included, which helped the company keep product flowing through the year.

United Solutions, headquartered and manufacturing in Leominster, MA, has been a manufacturing mainstay in the state for just over 100 years, with an additional plant in Sardis, MS, and recently has been adding additional resources and developing a focused strategy that it is following to pace the changing marketplace.

David Reilly, who recently came on as United Solutions president, noted that, during the height of the coronavirus crisis production suffered from a degree of absenteeism, causing capacity constraints and impacting productivity. Some employees were genuinely concerned about contracting COVID-19 and some took advantage of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to care for relatives but some also resigned in hopes of receiving unemployment and the additional \$600 a week federal government boost.

Sterilite has kept product flowing through its U.S. manufacturing network.



To look after employees, United has established company-wide safety protocols that included social distancing with six-foot space when appropriate. The company also has required that employees get the temperatures taken at least once a day, use hand sanitizer throughout the day, pass different doors for entry and exit, wear masks along with usual PPE for safety and maintain communications in a manner designed to ensure they felt the company has been doing whatever necessary to keep them safe and healthy.

"We also shuttered operations for several shifts to address COVID concerns," Reilly added. "We continue to follow the procedures set to ensure a safe working environment and don't see these protocols changing in the near future."

Because its products were essential in nature, as designated by authorities, United was able to move product and keep up with customers, maintaining a strong on time in full flow, Reilly noted.

"Demand continues to be strong," he added. "We established a 24/7 program for both factories. We also increased our base labor rate to attract new hires, as well as partnering with employment agencies to augment our staff."

United's ability to manufacture in



United Solutions addressed the COVID crisis with new procedures to ensure product flow.

the U.S. with a customer-centric staff ready to address the task of dealing with everyday and disruptive circumstances has helped the company work through its recent challenges.

Reilly said, "All of United's products are manufactured in the U.S. The fluctuations in point-of-sale data, shifting to different products, continually changing our inventory levels and reprioritizing manufacturing all required enhanced agility and reaction time. By being close to our customers, it allowed us to react, gain additional sales and execute on time." **RWB**

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—David Reilly,  
United Solutions

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