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with addition of a Countercurrent Planetary Mixer



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For Northeast Precast owner John Ruga, the past decade has been dominated by consistent recovery since the Great Recession of 2009. In that time, Northeast Precast has significantly expanded their pace of work - and struggled with unreliable equipment prone to maintenance issues. That all changed with the addition of the Xentrix Countercurrent Planetary Mixer from Simem America, which reduced equipment headaches and offered peace of mind that was missing before. "This mixer is everything advertised. We're no longer coming in every Saturday to fix something," said Ruga. "If something does happen, [Simem] does what they say, they're going to do to find a solution. We couldn't have asked for better service."

Starting on a Path to Increased Productivity

Barely a single business endured the Great Recession without feeling the sting and Northeast Precast was no exception. But with a long history of adaptation and evolution, as well as a willingness to jump at new opportunities, the company has grown from a small contracting business to a major player in the precast industry. Even through the economic downturn, a strong culture and forward-looking mindset helped Northeast Precast keep growing to now take on some of their biggest projects to date.

The company that would become Northeast Precast started as John Ruga Contractors in 1998, at which point John Ruga (now the owner of Northeast Precast) would work through a handful of custom home projects per year. Initially using styrofoam block forms to frame out foundations and pouring concrete on site, John could finish a foundation in approximately 2 weeks. But when he saw others in his area knocking out foundations at a faster rate by using cranes, he decided to step to a higher level. This observation put him on the path to contacting the Superior Walls product, which helped fuel expansion.

Recognizing his home state of New Jersey was an open territory for Superior Walls, he quickly seized the opportunity to license the brand and begin selling the precast wall product. This, in combination with his growing foundation business, led to a boom in production. The foundation business increased from 5 per year in 2001 to 86 in 2003.

Roaring Back After an Economic Shock

With the construction of a 25,000 square-foot production facility in Millville, NJ that same year, production continued to ramp and the business reached 380 foundations in 2004 and then jumped to nearly 800 in 2006. This led Ruga to again expand the production facility an additional 25,000 square feet in 2006. By 2008, the company fully rebranded to Northeast Precast and had taken on steel production to complement their foundation and walls business.

This was, of course, just in time for the economic crash which would eliminate a huge amount of Northeast's staff members and set the company on lean times for several months. However, this set Northeast Precast on a path to evolution, and with great fortune the recovery process began churning.

By 2010, Ruga and his remaining staff dedicated themselves to diversifying their offerings. The result: a big win, work for a major widening project of the New Jersey Turnpike in 2010.

This was the turning point, which also helped introduce Northeast Precast to an expanding scope of Department of Transportation projects. This naturally split their focus into roughly two markets: residential (including walls, foundations, and other smaller projects) and major commercial projects (including logistics centers, food plants, DOT work, and other large projects).



A key element of focus for all involved - installation speed. With anticipated productivity gains, cement reduction forecasts, and a full production schedule - the excitement level was high and the crew wasted no time making connections.



As planned, all components and equipment are in place. The Xentrix Mixer and SuperWash System were installed and fully operational in a matter of days. The project required very minimal retrofit work, thus speeding time to the production of high-quality concrete.

From the early days of only 5 or so foundations per year, Northeast Precast has since expanded significantly - having their most productive year to date with over 900 foundations installed in 2017, to now completing upwards of 5 to 6 foundations per day.

"Speed is always a value proposition for us," said Ruga. "I'm proud to have a staff full of really dynamic, interested people - most only in their 30s, but who have been with me since high school - who are really passionate about not only bringing in new business, but in maintaining repeat business through quality products and excellent customer service."

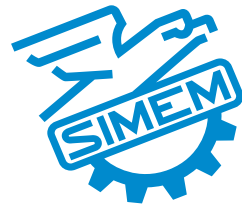
But that kind of production increase required a major investment in machinery, and it was one negative experience with a previous mixer which caused Ruga and his team pause, as that experience was more frustrating than anticipated.

"We went with the low bidder and the result was nothing but issues, basically from day one", recalled Ruga." It was this poor experience which led Northeast Precast to seek a different partner moving forward.

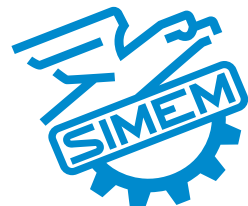
Struggling with Equipment Not Up to The Task

With a need to ramp up their production capabilities, Ruga and his team at Northeast Precast initially set their sights on buying their first precast plant. But like many other first forays into capital improvements, there were lessons to be learned.

While initially skeptical about replacing the plant in the middle of a project, Ruga identified a need for an improvement. In short, the mixer did not hold up. Already 18 months into a major project with production deadlines looming, Northeast Precast found themselves spending more time, effort, and



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money repairing damaged components than was economically feasible. This was in addition to struggling with purposefully over designed concrete recipes which compensated for the poor quality of the current machine's operation.

The breakthrough: a conversation with the team at Simem America.

Simem Delivers Peace of Mind, and a True Partnership

Mixing is among the most critical phases of any concrete production process, and Simem knows that the quality of the final product will rely heavily on the quality of the mixer being used. The answer was a Simem Xentrix Mixer and how it reliably produces a consistent homogenous mix with minimum mixing time.

Due to the efficiency of the countercurrent mixing action, the Xentrix range meets the requirements of various production processes. For precast producers like Northeast Precast, this translates to real dollar savings.

To compensate for the poor performance of the previous mixer, Northeast purposefully overdeveloped mixes. This practice increased wear and tear on the mixer and increased material consumption, which raised total cost. Additionally, inconsistent mixing results required constant vigilance, which damage productivity.

The Xentrix mixing action brings benefits beyond great concrete. Recognizing the total cost of ownership concept, interchangeable wear-liners and mixing paddles manufactured in Ni-Hard cast iron ensures extended operation. For instance, before replacement is required, the paddles have proven to produce fifty-thousand cu.yd. of concrete at a 2.5min. cycle-time. This helps keeps maintenance costs low and productivity high.

With highly reliable operation and consistent results, the Xentrix mixer has allowed Northeast Precast to significantly improve efficiency and productivity, while achieving a high-level of sustained quality and trusted production volume.

Simem has very willingly stepped in when needed. At times, in a fast-paced, performance driven environment, problems do arise. The Simem team's willingness to proactively support the root cause identification of a problem, further keeps Northeast producing smoothly and with confidence.

"We ran into only one repeated problem, with bolts snapping during the production process on the Xentrix mixer, and couldn't figure out the answer," recalls Ruga. "We contacted Simem and they put major effort into identifying the issue and

making actual changes to the design of the head to try and fix the problem. In the end, it was our own over-tightening of the bolts causing the issue, which Simem identified and covered completely. We couldn't have asked for better service."

More important than improved efficiency and great support with part replacement or machine repair, Ruga says, is simply the peace of mind the improved performance offers to his crew.

"It's just as important to make sure our staff has high morale and dealing with constant operation problems or machinery issues can do damage to that," said Ruga. "Working with the team at Simem America gave our crew the peace of mind to move forward confidently, and that has made a huge difference."

Moving into the Future with Confidence

With the Xentrix mixer from Simem safely supporting a variety of production projects, Northeast Precast is looking forward to continuing their steady growth with reduced maintenance costs, higher efficiency, and increased capacity.

"Working with a company like Simem America and using high-quality machinery, enhances our own reputation as a company who's willing to invest in the best equipment," said Ruga. "One of our chief goals is to cultivate repeat business and providing the best quality concrete products consistently helps us do just that. We will be working with Simem again in the future, and we hope our customers feel that same way when they work with us." ■

FURTHER INFORMATION



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