

CASE STUDY:

HARTLEY DUNCAN





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In the five decades he's worked in the industry, protective coatings and corrosion inspection professional Hartley Duncan has seen the sector's many transitions take place, all while the industrial world at large similarly went through so many changes of its own, on both the macro and micro levels.

Hartley entered the business in the 1960s, after the National Association of Corrosion Engineers was formed but before the now-renowned Coating Inspector Program came into existence. He would enroll in and pass the CIP, and is now NACE Certified Coating Inspector, Level 3, Number 2524, with Marine Endorsement.

After gaining considerable experience in the field of corrosion prevention, he started his own business in 1978, the Chandelle Company of Louisiana, which operated for 22 years producing corrosion-resistant coatings and linings. While affiliated with other companies before and since, Hartley has also operated on his own under the umbrella of Duncan Inspection Services, LLC.

Now, in 2017, he stands out as a testament to what stalwart dedication to a trade will bring you, even when aspects of one's chosen sector lack consistency or stability. Hartley's accolades speak for themselves: He is a lifetime member of NACE and has served on its board twice, earning the organization's top honor, the R.A. Brannon Award in 2012. Hartley has also been a member of the Society of Protective Coatings since 2003.

Yet even the most astute individuals in this business can't do everything by themselves, on an all but invariable basis. Hartley knows this well, and sought out Tom Swan and the proven equipment of M-Test to aid in his operations. What follows is an account of the connection they forged and the successes they helped each other achieve.

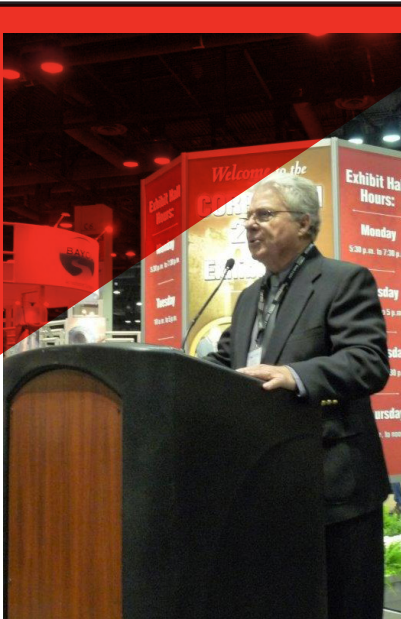


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Hartley Duncan and Tom Swan first got in touch when they both worked for Kenneth Tator Associates (now more commonly known as KTA), one of the coatings industry's oldest corrosion inspection and engineering firms. Tom had been there four years as district manager when Hartley arrived to take a role managing KTA's sales and services on the Gulf Coast. When Duncan moved on to become more focused on direct inspection and auditing, Swan remained focused on developing the instruments that allowed inspectors to fulfill their duties in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

As one might expect due to their shared trade, the two coatings professionals had plenty of reasons to keep in touch, and they did exactly that over the years. Yet more importantly, Hartley would find himself in need of the equipment Tom was selling both before and after Tom began working for himself under the name of M-Test. The business relationship between Tom and Hartley continues to this day based on Hartley's continuing equipment requirements. Hartley typically phones Tom two to three times each month.

He will be one of the first people to attest that when he calls up M-Test, Tom answers as soon as he can, processes the tool order and sends it out either via overnight shipping or as fast as can be reasonably managed. Additionally, when complications or other unpredictable elements of a particular inspection project arise and cause Hartley to need a piece of equipment he didn't expect, this is never a problem for Tom: He will send along the equipment at virtually a moment's notice, fresh right out of the box. The ability to roll with the punches in such a fashion carries value in any business, but in coatings audits, which can impact people's safety and the integrity of infrastructure, quick reactions to potential problems are vital.



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Anyone who possesses even a passing familiarity with the coatings industry knows how much things have changed since the days when Hartley first entered it, in terms of methods, tools and performance standards. The equipment in particular has undergone massive upgrades and made inspectors' lives so much easier than in years past. Hartley attests to the fact that Tom evolved in lockstep with the sector, providing new tools and phasing out archaic instruments as needed. Also, he always offers samples of new tools to his longtime customers once he incorporates them into his product catalog, giving clients a chance to see what they'll be working with before making a purchase.

Yet with all that said, product alone is not the foundation of any truly successful and long-lasting business partnership. What truly matters, in the long run, is the development and maintenance of a one-on-one relationship between vendor and client.

Although Hartley Duncan has a personal connection to Tom Swan due to the two having worked in the same company, Hartley states unequivocally that Tom treats all of his customers in the same personable, forthright and helpful manner. Far different from the sometimes clinically impersonal nature of ordering corrosion testing equipment from the manufacturer or via a large company, clients always know what to expect from Tom and M-Test. The unexpected is wonderful sometimes in life, but in business (particularly this business), Hartley has labored long enough to understand and appreciate the benefit of consistency and continuity - and that is exactly what he knows Tom will offer him. Whatever risks he may face on the job itself, he can be confident that the testing equipment he receives is readily available and reliable once put to use.



Due to his immense satisfaction with what Tom has provided him, Hartley says he always recommends M-Test to industry colleagues who inquire about equipment vendors. Many of them already do work with Tom, but Hartley is sure to recommend Tom's reliability, diverse product catalog and straight-shooting manner to those not yet in the know.



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