

Fort Worth Business Press

GET TOUGH

*Fort Worth company
shows its strength*

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When Davis Pitts purchased Southwest Commercial Products Inc., which makes Super Tough Hand Scrub, he didn't know how much physical labor he was in for.

He and his sole employee, Chris Maxwell, spent most of last summer painstakingly installing a huge, heavy augur filling system — in a hot warehouse — for manufacturing the scrub. They had begun to get more orders than they could handle, and now are able to build a surplus of product.



PHOTO BY GUY LAWSON

Super Tough, an industrial-strength hand cleanser used in industries that cause hands to get stained with ink or grease, is different than other scrubs because it uses detergent and plastic particles rather than solvent and pumice, which means it is easier on the skin and the drains. Pumice can slowly build up and create drainage problems, while the plastic particles float, making them drain easily.

Pitts, a Texas Christian University graduate, purchased the business in 2003 from a woman who had run it since the early 1980s. He said the changing print industry, which is quickly switching from producing paper products that stain the hands to using more desktop publish-

ing applications that require only a computer, caused her to decide to sell.

"She could see the print industry changing," he said. "Supply companies she sold the product to were being bought up. The basic product is still good, we just had to change the way we do business."

Pitts said that by diversifying the business to industries besides print, such as mechanics, eyeglass manufacturers and power generation companies, he increased the revenue by 18 percent during the first year of operation and 10 percent during the second year.

"We're building our distribution network and trying to develop other industries we can sell into," he said.

Though he sells most of the scrub via distributors to large plants and companies nationwide, it is available for retail sale at around \$1 for 4 ounces locally at Fort Worth Bolt & Tool on Bledsoe Street and Stuart Hose & Pipe Company on Riverside Drive. The product used to be called "Tuff Scrub," but the name had to be changed due to trademark issues.

Pitts has had to learn about chemistry since purchasing Super Tough Hand Scrub and has taught himself how detergents, solvents and other cleansers work. He is working on designing the cleanser to fit in different packaging such as tubes and a pump system. Currently, it is only sold in tubs. The tubes will come out

soon, but the pump is more complicated, said Pitts. In order to get the thick, goopy product to pump smoothly, Pitts must thin the product without detracting from its usefulness while making it gel. He figured out he must use something called "realogical modifiers" to do this, and hopes to have the packaging ready soon.

While Pitts didn't say he has any business role models, he said he does try to be around positive people.

"I like people who have no excuses, they just get stuff done," he said. "I surround myself with that type of person."

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