

## Rockmore International

The company has experienced 50 years of growth in the drilling market.

By Jennifer Strawn

When Rockmore International, a manufacturer of rock drilling tools for percussive drilling, entered the market more than 50 years ago, its product line focused primarily on disposable drill bits for handheld drilling applications in underground mining.

Now the company, which was originally known as Throwaway Bit Corp., has expanded its product line to include mining, construction, quarrying, and water well drilling. It exports its goods to more than 75 countries.

"We developed it from a small company, product driven, to a global company that is brand driven," says Pejman Eghdami, executive vice president of Rockmore. "And we diversified not only across different geographical markets but also diversified across different drilling markets such as mining, construction, and water well."

The Eghdami family purchased the business in 1977 as an investment that allowed them to enter the manufacturing sector, says Eghdami. His father, Cyrus, now operates the company as president.

At the time, the U.S. underground mining market was robust. By the 1980s the corporation, headquartered in Wilsonville, Oregon, had augmented its product line to include DTH bits, extension rods, couplings, and shank adapters. With the expansion, Throwaway Bit Corp. was able to provide its customers with the complete "drill string" package. Advanced tools for automated drill rigs also were added to its line of handheld drilling tools.

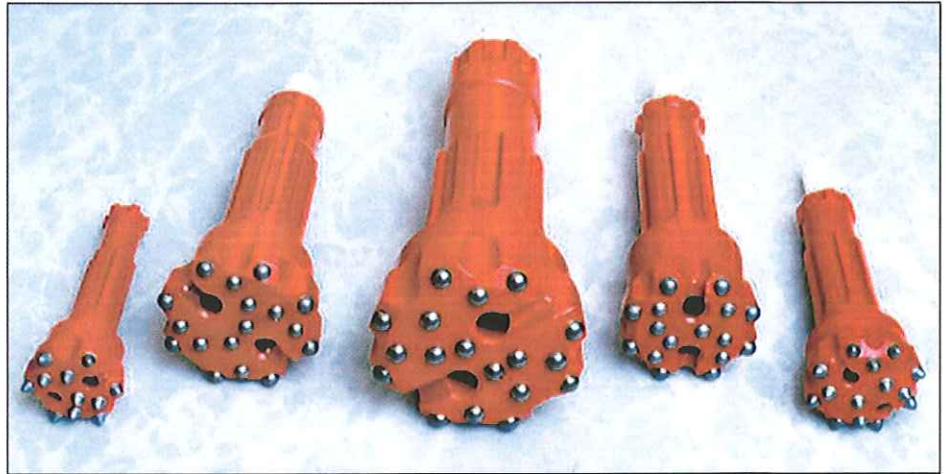
"The opportunity was there and the company was doing well, so it was a natural phase to serve the market demand," Eghdami explains. "And I would say the growth came through success. I mean, it wasn't forced. It was a success of our operations."

As the company's product line diversified, it became clear that it had outgrown its name. The rock drilling tools it manufactured were no longer intended for single use, so in 1996 the company changed its name to Rockmore International, which reflected the worldwide image the company strives to achieve.

In order to establish Rockmore as a worldwide operation, the company needed to seek markets outside the United States. Exporting opportunities allowed the corporation to open new sales channels overseas.

In 1997, the corporation acquired HP Rocbo GmbH, an Austrian manufacturer of surface and underground drill rods. The purchase enabled Rockmore to add a facility in Austria, and HP Rocbo was renamed Rockmore International GmbH in order to reflect Rockmore's brand name.

"One of the important areas that distinguishes us is the company has a 50-year history of manufacturing this product line specifically for the mining and



Rockmore provides DTH hammers and bits to the water well market.



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construction markets. That history is part of our strength, and so is the combined knowledge and commitment to not only growth, but growing in a proper way via a commitment to quality control and commitment to a brand strategy," Eghdami says. "That has been very instrumental for us. We understand the brand strategy requires excellent products, outstanding service, and commitment from a manufacturer's perspective. So, adhering to brand has allowed us to grow and excel and differentiate ourselves."

One goal, particularly in its quest to be recognized as a worldwide leader in the drilling industry, is to maintain a brand identity synonymous with quality, service, and innovation.

"Customer service is part of our brand strategy," Eghdami emphasizes. "We're involved in an industry that expects and demands field support, that demands technical support, that demands good inventory support, and we've always been committed to that."

Innovation has led Rockmore to diversify across drilling markets, and the water well drilling market is an industry that Rockmore has focused on in recent years. As a member of the National Ground Water Association, it participates in various events, including the annual Ground Water Expo. The com-

pany also exhibits at other industry trade shows including events for the California Groundwater Association, New England Water Well Association, Oregon Ground Water Association, and the South Atlantic Well Drillers Association.

In 1999, Rockmore fully engaged in the DTH market by supplying DTH hammers and bits to the water well market on a global scale. A full line of DTH bits was developed to service all drilling conditions. A DTH hammer line for surface and underground drilling was later introduced.

"(Water well drilling) is a growing market," Eghdami says. "It gives us further diversification in a market area that was underdeveloped by us — untapped by us in a sense. And we believe it's very important for sustainable development in the Third World. So, we believe we are contributing to sustainable development."

Rockmore believes many innovations from the mining/construction sector that have not been introduced elsewhere can be used to contribute to advancement of the water well drilling sector. Some of Rockmore's recent product lines include a line of DTH bits with the multi-dome carbide design, which Rockmore says provides faster bit penetration rates. Another product features a DTH bit design incorporating functional asymmetry.

"We see the market as conservative and the adoption of new and innovative techniques are slower because the manufacturers in the drilling industry have somewhat overlooked the water well drilling market. The focus and innovation seems to go to more to the blast-hole mining drilling market," Eghdami points out.

Overall, Eghdami says Rockmore appreciates where its roots lie, yet remains fixed upon the future and further success of drilling solutions for the water well drilling sector. With more than 50 years of service, Rockmore continues to provide rock drilling tool technology for a variety of drilling markets.

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