

Line-X shifts target market to manufacturers as truck sales dip

by **Nevonne McDaniels**

Line-X Spray-On Truck Bedliners had a record year in 2007, with the shop at 110 Chehalis St., Wenatchee, busier than it had been since it moved to the location in 2003.

But by mid-2008, owner Kellin Keesee said he started noting a slowdown that mirrored the nationwide decline in new truck sales, not a big surprise since 95 percent of his business is spraying the fast-drying polyurethane formula into the beds of pickup trucks. Of those, about 75 percent are for new trucks, he said.

His monthly records showed ups and downs, but overall, he was down about 10 percent from the year before. Keesee, who had taken over managing the business after his brother Ryan moved away from the area in 2007 (the franchise is owned by their dad, Barry Keesee), said he realized a change in the game plan was needed.

Apparently, the corporate office had the same idea. Line-X introduced several products targeted at industrial and manufacturing customers at the company's spring tradeshow. They included formulas that are everything from more flexible to strong as steel and fireproof to chemical resistant — in a variety of colors. The spray-on product can be applied to metal, fiberglass, concrete and wood surfaces.

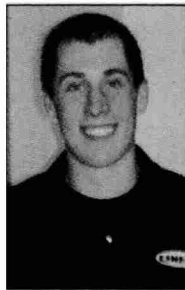
Keesee said he has been making presentations to a whole new set of customers in the hopes of diversifying his business.

"My goal is to fill the void with the industrial stuff," he said.

He said that the majority of Line-X's work likely will remain the

spray-on truck bedliners, but he sees opportunity in talking to local manufacturers and other businesses about Line-X's products. Keesee said his portable machine works well to coat items too big to bring to the shop.

The outreach is working, he said. In addition to bedliners, he has coated stairs to prevent slipping, walls to keep them from being damaged by impact from equipment, and pieces of equipment to prevent corrosion or other damage from use.



Kellin Keesee

He is even putting up a case study on the company resource site for using one Line-X formula

to coat the inside of a vat used for corrosive chemicals. He said he was contacted by the company looking for a way to keep the chemicals from eating away at the container. He sent a sample of the chemical in question to Line-X's research and development team for testing. When it was determined the Line-X liner would do the trick, Keesee got the job.

Having access to the chemists and researchers at Line-X adds depth to the services he offers his customers, he said. And the case studies put up by franchise owners help give him ideas to expand his customer base and offer quick answers to questions that start something like, "Will it work on ..."

In addition to the Line-X coating business, Keesee also continues to



operate Twister, a truck accessory business (lift kits, lights, wheels, shocks and winches) in the same 5,000-square-foot space that houses the Line-X shop.