

# A New Day

*Trim-Lok has a new sales team prepared to talk with customers about the company's new RV trim and seal products.*

By Kristen Fiore | Photos by Stillson Studio

Back in the 1970s, Gary Whitener slept all night next to Trim-Lok's punch press. When the press ran out of material and automatically shut off, Whitener would wake, reload the machine and then drift back to sleep.

During the day, he would make sales calls and would stress out when he received a large 5,000-foot trim order.

In hindsight, Dan Whitener, Trim-Lok's president and Gary's son, finds his father's capacity-driven early stress levels amusing.

"Today," Whitener said, "we ship around 500 million feet of products a year."

Trim-Lok has nearly 350 employees, two U.S.-based facilities and worldwide distribution. The company is now producing new RV trim and seal products. Additionally, Trim-Lok recently hired a new sales team consisting of mechanically proficient representatives based in their service areas.

"From our perspective, we are better than any other competitor out there," Whitener said. "We have technical

know-how and innovation. We have a great engineering and a great production team and have the wherewithal to stock products to customers' needs. If you place an order for a particular part at 9:35 in the morning, it will ship the same day. From a company this large, that is dang near unheard of."

**““** *We wanted something to push on easily ... When you go to pull it off, it pulls against itself.*

**– Dan Whitener**

## Edgy Upgrades

Over the years, Whitener said, Trim-Lok has proactively sought solutions to develop new products. Each product is built for easy installation, saving OEM customers hassle and labor costs.



More than three decades ago, Dan Whitener stepped in to lead Trim-Lok, the company his father founded. The trim and seal supplier today has over 350 employees and worldwide distribution.





Production Supervisor Carlos Fuentes collects RV trim. The plastic pieces pictured replaced aluminum parts Trim-Lok previously made.



Quality Manager Jim McVay uses a digital comparator to inspect Trim-Lok parts.

Trim-Lok's new Edge Trim Plus was years in the making and is an upgrade to the company's legacy standard edge trim, which has sold billions of feet of material since its introduction.

The regular edge trim needs around a pound of force to push on at installation and a similar pound of force to remove. Edge Trim Plus still requires about a pound of force to push on but roughly 6 pounds of pressure to pull off.

The new edge trim combines high-quality PVC with a newly engineered gripping tongue technology. The combination provides easy installation yet increases hold.

“There is no way for water to get through [the slide-out seal] because it is one constant piece. We wanted to come up with a better mouse trap.”

– Dan Whitener

“We wanted something to push on easily and pull off hard,” Whitener said. “That is what it should do. When you go to pull it off, it pulls against itself.”

He said Edge Trim Plus is one example of the company's continuous product improvement and will be highly sought by RV manufacturers.

**Sticky Seals**

Trim-Lok also recently introduced a new Living Hinge product, various slide-out seals and new peel-and-stick fender flares.

Global aluminum shortages in recent years motivated Trim-Lok use new materials to develop a hinged screw cap cover.

“We came up with a plastic version that has heat and shrink resistance,” Whitener said, “so that when it gets hot, it does not expand and contract. We created this Living Hinge. ...It snaps in amongst itself.”



Pat Liverman is the general manager at Trim-Lok's new plant in Elkhart, Indiana.



[L to R] Whitener and Mike Oltman, maintenance associate, test the taping machine to ensure the machine is accurately applying tape to Trim-Lok products.



Associate Laura Goe Salas Vilchis coils RV trim before delivery.



Kareem Mallard loads a pallet of RV seals to ship to Elkhart customers.



Anna Olson, sales support and customer service associate, reviews the product delivery calendar.





Trim-Lok's Elkhart operations are led by: Front row (L to R) Whitener and Liverman; Second Row: (L to R) Yesenia Castillo, human resources manager and Nicole Miller, sales and logistics associate; Third Row: (L to R) McVay and Rod Bugg, maintenance manager; Fourth Row: Fuentes.

The one-piece hinged screw cap cover replaces traditional two-piece aluminum rub rails and vinyl cover inserts. The hinge's TPO plastic construction weighs less than aluminum, cutting shipping costs when companies order large quantities. Additionally, the Living Hinge is UV and fade resistant. Trim-Lok's latest slide-out seal design includes its own Living Hinge. Installers cut a notch in the three-ribbed bulb seal, then slip the flap into the seal. Whitener said the result is a seal that never leaks.

**“ [Salespeople] are able to talk about a designable part or help a customer solve a design problem. They are very equipped to sit down and talk with purchasing agents or design engineers.”**

- Dan Whitener

“There is no way for water to get through there because it is one constant piece,” he said. “We wanted to come up with a better mouse trap. It is an integrated piece that helps from installation to being leak-proof.” Fender flares typically require cutting metal, drilling holes in the metal and bolting the flare around the RV. Trim-Lok's peel-and-stick fender flares eliminate drilling and bolting. The EPDM dense rubber material has an adhesive backing. Peeling the backing tape off and pressing the flare to the fender attaches the fender flare. Testing showed that to remove the stick-on fender flare requires 30 pounds of force per inch. Whitener said because the new products simplify installation, they are also easier to service, repair and replace.

**New Sales Team**  
Trim-Lok also revamped its customer service approach. In 2023, the company hired a new sales team. Previously, salespeople were based at Trim-Lok's California headquarters. They had sales territories throughout the country. Salespeople would often jump on a plane, lose a day to travel to reach customers and then travel home at the week's end. Trim-Lok's new sales team includes representatives based in their sales territories. “We realigned that so now we have people who live in the territories in which they work,” Whitener said. “It just makes more sense.” The company also put a premium on recruiting salespeople who have mechanical proficiency. Whitener said the new salespeople now function as sales engineers. “They are able to talk about a designable part or help a customer

solve a design problem,” he said. “They are very equipped to sit down and talk with purchasing agents or design engineers.” Whitener said the recruiting efforts led to salespeople spending less time unable to answer customers' technical questions and having to connect customers to someone who can. “The whole city hall approach,” Whitener said, “I am not a fan.” Although the sales team is large and spread out around the world, Whitener said representatives stay plugged into the company despite being geographically separate. Salespeople use Zoom meetings to keep current on customers, products and new technology the company develops. Each year, they all gather to conduct sales training.

**Facilities and Machinery**  
Trim-Lok operates out of a 300,000-square-foot facility in Buena Park,

California. In 2015, the company opened a facility in Elkhart, Indiana, to serve RV manufacturers. In 2022, the company completed an expansion to the Elkhart facility, growing from 27,000 square feet to 150,000 square feet of manufacturing and warehouse space. The new building has an additional 5,500 square feet of office space. The Indiana facility addition and expansion, the new and updated products and the revamped sales team are all nods to Trim-Lok's problem-solving approach since its founding. Whitener attributes the company's success to his father, who he said was a mechanical and business genius. “He told me, ‘Danny, good machines make good parts,’” Whitener said, “so make sure you keep your machines happy and all your design engineers happy so we continue to make good parts.” **RVN**