

# A Jack of All Trades

by Chelsea Knorr, Associate Editor, *Orthotown Magazine*

If Ortho Classic was a man, he would be a renaissance man, a jack of all trades – from developing and manufacturing to acting as a vendor and providing marketing strategies. Ortho Classic is no fly-by-night company. It's been around for more than 20 years, consistently presenting the industry with new ideas and high-tech products, all made in America. *Orthotown Magazine* sat down with the President of Ortho Classic, Rolf Hagelganz, to talk about how the company started and where it's headed.

*Ortho Classic President Rolf Hagelganz*

### First of all, can you tell us a little about Ortho Classic?

**Hagelganz:** Ortho Classic is a sales subsidiary of World Class Technology, Inc. World Class Technology is the manufacturing company that my father started in 1991 and I rejoined in 1999. We began by manufacturing mini-twin brackets, self-ligating brackets and other orthodontic components for some of the largest orthodontic companies in the world. In 2004 we decided to make the transition over to direct sales and started producing our own line of orthodontic products. Since then, we have worked hand-in-hand with doctors within the industry designing and producing new and exciting products.

### Tell us about yourself and your management team. What experience do all of you have?

**Hagelganz:** I have more than 30 years of manufacturing experience. I started working with my father at a very young age in the tool and die business. In the early years we worked with a gentleman by the name of Dr. Raymond Wiech in the development of the metal injection molding (MIM) process. We are basically one of the oldest MIM manufacturers in the world. In 2004 we hired Eric Ackerman as our marketing director to help us with branding our new Ortho Classic name. In 2007 we brought on Perry Haque as our international sales director; next year he will have been in the business for 50 years! Haque started in 1963 with Ormco then worked 19 years with Larry Andrews and the "A" Company, then did another 20 years with Ortho Organizers before coming on board with us. In 2011 we hired Lance Lipscomb as our national sales director. He started in 1992 with the "A" Company and has been in the dental field for 19 years. He and Eric have helped develop our inside and outside sales teams. Ed Alvarez was hired in 2006 and is our vice president of manufacturing operations. Jeff Petcavich was also hired in 2006 as our director of medical product development. Kent Jensen, our CFO, has been with us since 2003, and Juergen Bathen, our top engineer who works very closely with me, has been here since 2004.

### Tell us a little about the company's history.

**Hagelganz:** Ortho Classic has manufacturing roots as far back as 1963 when my dad, the founder, Klaus Hagelganz began molding very complex parts that were impossible to produce with conventional methods of press and sintering. After working for years with other companies, helping perfect the metal formula that would later become the standard for metal injection molding, my father founded World Class Technology in 1991. World Class Technology began manufacturing parts for many different industries including medical and aerospace but quickly realized our MIM process could create some of the highest quality parts the orthodontic industry had ever seen.



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We started specializing in the proprietary process of metal injection molding nickel-free components, manufacturing brackets, buccal tubes, lingual buttons and self-ligating systems for some of the world's biggest orthodontic companies. This was the start of what made us one of the leaders in orthodontic production and new technologies.

In 2004 we expanded operations and began selling directly to distributors and doctors under the Ortho Classic name. The increased production led to a company-wide expansion with Ortho Classic moving into our new 60,000-square-foot, high-tech facility. Ortho Classic has matured quickly; growing more than 30 percent in the last year. Building from the ground up, Ortho Classic's sales staff and distribution network have grown tremendously with distribution in more than 80 countries.

## What is your business philosophy?

**Hagelganz:** Our mission is to revolutionize the orthodontic industry by providing high quality products, service and innovative ideas at a competitive price. This statement is not just some contrived marketing statement, but something we strive to follow and succeed at on a daily basis. I started working with my father from a very young age and I really learned a lot from him on the manufacturing side, from building tools to injection molding to the sintering process and eventually metallurgy.

## Ortho Classic acts as both a manufacturer of products and a vendor. How does this integration work?

**Hagelganz:** From a global market perspective, it really is a perfect fit. We believe we can meet our customers' needs better than any other company. Our focus on vertical integration gives us the ability to have full control of our products and services without relying on anyone else. If a customer needs something specific or has an issue, we can help them without having to go to the manufacturer, because we are the manufacturer! As the manufacturer and the vendor, there are no middle-man markups and we pass that savings onto our customers.



## You mentioned that you also manufacture for the medical field. How does that relate to Ortho Classic?

**Hagelganz:** The medical industry is huge; just one medical company can be worth more than the entire orthodontic industry combined. One company we prototype for is worth more than \$74 billion! Manufacturing for medical companies requires meeting a lot of very specific requirements. We manufacture

parts from titanium and F75 implantable nickel-free alloys that are used in the body. These types of parts require us to go through a ton of research and development and FDA processes. In turn we are able to use these same processes and apply them within the orthodontic field. This is why we have the tightest tolerances in the industry.

## What are your most popular products?

**Hagelganz:** Currently our most popular products are brackets, bands, buccal tubes and elastics. However, we have many products that are really starting to catch fire; the hottest right now being our innovative OrthoVend Inventory System. The OrthoVend is a fully automated inventory system that is small enough to fit on just about any counter. It can hold a month's worth of inventory and it will automatically reorder products once it reaches a pre-designated reorder point. The best part about this system is nothing is charged to the doctor until he uses it. This means you can literally have thousands of dollars worth of inventory at hands' reach and not pay for any of it until it is dispensed. The OrthoVend system



includes an online inventory management module and free shipping for refill products. It provides safe, secure storage that eliminates the possibility of ever running out of product. It shrinks stock, and it lessens waste and mix-ups.

One of our most innovative current products is our new accelerated orthodontic system code named K3. The K3 is a completely aesthetic system that can align Class I cases in a matter of months. It is meant to be an aligner alternative that gives the control back to the orthodontist.

## Ortho Classic has become known for its metal injection molding. What is this and why does it make a difference?

**Hagelganz:** Metal injection molding, otherwise known as MIM, is simply combining powdered metal with binders (think of them as the glue) and injecting them into a mold in the shape of the part. The powders are only 16 microns, which is about the size of a speck of baby powder. With our molding machines we can produce up to 10 brackets at a time. On average, one machine will make 36,000 brackets per day. My father and I have been in the molding business since 1981 and have developed many trade secrets in the MIM industry that are exclusive to our company. Because we control all of our own tooling, feedstock and sintering processes in-house, our tolerances are the highest in the industry. This, in turn, gives the orthodontist the most accurate bracket and prescription possible and it really shows in the final results of their patients.



## Ortho Classic prides itself on its customer service. In what ways do you make this your focus?

**Hagelganz:** Every Ortho Classic customer has a team of customer service agents that work for them; one inside and one outside representative. While we strive to have the highest quality product possible, I think it is our dedicated customer service that has helped us grow so quickly. We have a program called VAST which stands for Value Added Services and Technology. This program is meant to solve the common problems that come up in our industry. This is why we provide services like a full laboratory, marketing and design, and OrthoVend.

## How do you obtain feedback from your customers? What do you do with that information?

**Hagelganz:** That's the really great part about us being a global company. We can track trends and information from around the world to help us best meet our customers' needs. Our customer service agents (both domestic and international) work hand-in-hand with our customers to continually better our products and services. We also love working with doctors and their amazing ideas. The best ideas always come from those who do the day-to-day grind and I love sitting down with doctors and applying my engineering know-how to their medical knowledge.



## What sort of training can your customers expect to receive?

**Hagelganz:** As part of our VAST system we carry our own CE certificate. This means we can provide continuing education courses for low to no cost. We offer our facility at no charge to any study group that would like to utilize its amenities. We have a full lineup of lecturing doctors in our speaker's bureau and they are all available to speak at large events or even at smaller in-office trainings.

## What has contributed to Ortho Classic's success?

**Hagelganz:** Consistency in service and simplicity in process; we take all of our customers' needs into consideration and never compromise quality. We are a privately held family-owned company and we only have to report to our customers and not a bunch of corporate bureaucrats. We have been able to avoid the constant change that you see in our industry due to the fact that we are privately held. We are proud not to be owned by a huge dental conglomerate and never have to worry about stock holders and their agendas.

## Tell us about the marketing component of Ortho Classic.

**Hagelganz:** OrthoAMP is the name of our marketing service. The AMP stands for Advertising, Marketing and Practice Builder. This service was started by our Marketing Director Eric Ackerman and has really grown from the heart of our marketing department. As our marketing department grew so did its equipment and crew. It was a natural progression to offer the same great services that we had for ourselves to our customer base. OrthoAMP offers a full line of services from Web site design to custom car wraps. We have full-time designers, illustrators and photographers ready and eager to take on your project. I think these services have really opened a lot of doors for our company and we take just as much pride in them as we do our products that we manufacture.

## What do you find most appealing about working with orthodontists?



**Hagelganz:** Growing up working with my father, I have found that many orthodontists have the same kind of tinkering mentality that I do. The only difference is they approach it from a medical or clinical perspective

whereas I look at it from an engineering perspective. I love working with them and combining our ideas to come up with new innovations. I really believe in everything the orthodontist does and I can see the difference they make in their patients' lives. Just to be a small part of that process is very gratifying.

## How do you work with orthodontists to ensure they are integrating the products in the best way possible?

**Hagelganz:** We offer many CE credited courses in the U.S. and many more around the world. We also offer complementary training to study groups, and our field reps are happy to do in-office "lunch and learns" whenever needed.

## What are Ortho Classic's greatest advantages?

**Hagelganz:** Adaptability and re-actability; being able to approach the industry with new ideas and solutions.

## What can we expect to see in the future?

**Hagelganz:** I think we will continue to grow at an exponential rate. We will continue to create innovative product lines with a continued focus on "Made in America" without any compromise to our goals of quality innovation and continued R&D for the future. We will continue to work toward the betterment of the orthodontic industry.

For more information, visit [www.orthoclassic.com](http://www.orthoclassic.com) or call 866-752-0065. ■