

## Nissin, formerly EPI, rolls with economic punches

Auto parts maker stays put, but changes name to reflect unity with parent company in Japan.

By [Thomas Gnau](#), Staff Writer

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ENGLEWOOD — As soon as a visitor steps into Nissin Precision North America's 110,000-square-foot plant, the metallic slam of a 1,000-pound press might be heard — and felt.

Michael Greer, the company's vice president, manufacturing, likes that sound. It means the plant is busy stamping and shaping metal.

"Some people think of it as noise," Greer said. "We've come to think of it as music."

The company still boasts large "EPI" lettering on the front of its plant off Union Boulevard, standing for Englewood Precision Inc. But recently, the firm changed its name to Nissin, to reflect unity with the family of firms owned by parent company Nissin Kogyo Co. of Otsu, Japan, Greer said.

Nissin North America has weathered the recession, helped in part by last year's federal "cash for clunkers" program to encourage motorists to trade older cars for newer models. Nissin serves tier-1 suppliers to automakers like Toyota, Nissan and particularly, Honda.

The company came to Ohio to serve Panasonic, which was then making picture tubes in Troy. As that business waned, EPI rolled with the changes, moving into the automotive market at a time when other manufacturers were leaving. Counter-intuitive as the move may seem, it's not a change the company has regretted, Greer said.

"Things are starting to work again in the automotive world," he said.

Asked about Toyota's recent recall issues, Greer noted that Honda is Nissin North America's largest customer. But he believes Toyota remains strong. The company makes parts primarily for the Toyota Sequoia and Highlander and will start making parts for the Camry this fall, Greer said.

The company broke ground in 1989 and began production in 1990. It has been a solid corporate citizen since then, said William Singer, Englewood's economic development director.

"I think they were kind of a pioneer in the city, one of our first large employers of that nature," Singer said.

Tom Powers is director in assurance and business advisory services for GBQ Partners, a Columbus accounting and consulting firm, and a former Japanese business group leader for

Ernst & Young.

“There are quite a few Japanese-supplier companies within the footprint of Ohio,” more than a few of them here to serve Honda, Powers said.

These firms are drawn from abroad by economic deals, universities, white-collar service and technology firms, as well as Ohio’s longtime manufacturing base, he believes. “The suppliers are going to follow,” Powers said.

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