

# Making the connection!

An unbeatable selection, convenience and customer-driven solutions make Acklands-Grainger the place to turn to for all your fastener needs



here's a lot more than nuts and bolts to the fastener business, and Acklands-Grainger is beefing up its commitment to supplying Canadian companies with a full line of fasteners for the maintenance of their operations, as well as production and project work.

In addition to its own private label brand, Acklands-Grainger partners with the leading national fastener suppliers to offer its customers the broadest selection of fasteners for their operations. Add to that the ability to source hard-to-find products and inventory management solutions to help customers manage their fastener purchases, and you've got a source for fasteners that's hard to beat.

#### **It pays to consolidate**

With 155 branches across the country, customers can expect the same level of service and product availability from coast to coast. Acklands-Grainger's full fastener offering allows customers to consolidate their purchases, particularly when they're also buying safety or industrial supplies, helping to reduce their supplier base and cut down on soft costs – all the way from the number of cheques they cut to the number of invoices they process.

"We have spent a lot of time working with our key supplier-partners to make sure we've got the right product mix. We've done our homework, and we're confident that we have got what we need to serve customers in a number of different market segments," says Scott Laurie, regional sales manager for fasteners with Acklands-Grainger in Edmonton.

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“All this groundwork is paying real dividends for our customers,” he adds.

Acklands-Grainger’s partnership with the industry’s top fastener suppliers – those that are the best in their discipline or areas of expertise – means the company is positioned to provide customers with a total fastener solution – from metric fasteners to stainless steel fasteners, and virtually everything in between.

Further, Acklands-Grainger’s own private label brand, Profast’ners, allows the company to source

products on a global scale and provide both packaged and bulk quantities of general fastener products.

#### **Selection, availability and convenience make it easy**

“We have the largest inventory of MRO fasteners available of any industrial supplier in Canada,” says Glenn Wallace, general manager with Acklands-Grainger. “That gives customers confidence that we have the stock they need, and it’s convenient for them to purchase it from any of our branches.”

The Acklands-Grainger Fastener Catalogue offers a large assortment of fasteners. And the soon-to-be-released 2009 catalogue will feature an additional 40 pages of fasteners.

For added customer convenience, the entire Acklands-Grainger fastener offering is now available online at [acklandsgrainger.com](http://acklandsgrainger.com) so customers can purchase their fasteners 24/7.

#### **Solutions built with the customer in mind**

Typically customers have to buy fasteners in bulk – or thousands of fasteners in one package. With the Profast’ners line, where the focus is general fasteners such as nuts, bolts and washers, they can buy in small

## Getting it – and getting it right!

In some cases, fasteners have special dimensions or configurations – particularly when customers are working in a production environment or on construction or repair applications and using fasteners to build a customized product.

There are a number of fastener configurations already available, made of different materials with different types of coatings (a single bolt, for example, can come in about 20 or 30 configurations, depending on what it’s made of). But, in some cases, the fasteners have to be manufactured.

“We have a sourcing department, so if someone is looking for a specific fastener that is outside the standard offering, we have a group of individuals who are responsible for finding it from any number of manufacturers around the world,” says Acklands-Grainger’s Scott Laurie. “If they require a unique fastener, we will go out and source it.”

Acklands-Grainger also has 16 fastener specialists across Canada to help customers with questions about specific products or applications.

“This is something we offer that sets us apart from many of our competitors,” says Laurie.

These specialists can provide assistance in identifying unique fasteners, or help our sales personnel with fasteners questions. “Our fastener specialists are an important resource that helps us make sure we’re providing our customers with fastener solutions that make sense for their business,” he adds. “That, in a nutshell, is our strength.”

package sizes, such as 10 or 20 at a time. “Our ability to source globally for products from the best manufacturers at preferred prices makes it possible to offer customers this kind of flexibility,” says Wallace.

National brands like POP, Brighton Best, Helicoil, Fuller Metric, Hilti, Star, Robertson, Cobra, Durham, Unbrako and ITW round out the fastener selection.

“The national brands complement the Profast’ners line to create a wider breadth of products for the customer,” says Laurie. “There’s very little you can’t find.”

The recent launch of its vendor-managed inventory program provides much greater control for the customer and allows Acklands-Grainger to better react to the needs of the customer on-site on a daily or weekly basis.

“Fasteners tend to be a challenging area for customers because it’s difficult keeping them organized and accessible,” says Wallace. At a lot of customer sites, fasteners are free issue (such as open fastener bins on walls), which means when workers need a bolt or washer, they take it freely and don’t have to ask or account for it.

“That becomes a challenge for the customer to keep those bins filled and organized so workers get what they need without downtime or delay,” he says. With vendor-managed inventory, an account manager sits down with the customer and agrees on stocking levels, then goes out on a scheduled basis (typically every one or two weeks) to scan the bins, create an order for the customer to approve, ship the order and restock the bins a day or two later. “We perform the full cycle,” he says.

Later this year, Acklands-Grainger will introduce customer-managed inventory, where it will sell or lease equipment to the customer to do exactly that same process. Customers can scan the information from the bins, download it, approve it, send in the order and restock the fasteners after they’ve shipped. “That works in cases where customers want to have more control,” says Wallace. “In some cases, it’s actually a requirement, such as in a unionized shop.”

Both of these programs are designed to offer customers cost and productivity efficiencies. Customers that take advantage of the vendor-managed inventory program are generally larger in scale with more complex operations, such as multiple locations.

While fasteners are only one component of the vendor-managed inventory solutions offered by Acklands-Grainger, they tend to be an important one, since it’s typically something customers want to simplify and make less time-consuming.

“The difficulty with fasteners is that the part numbers are extremely long, sometimes 15 or 16 characters,” says Laurie. “So if you have a 400-line order, it’s a lot of keystrokes, whereas with a bar code, you scan it, drop it in a document and print the order – there’s no keying involved. If customers can find somebody to come in, manage it properly, not overstock, and supply usage reports, which we can do, they’re on board.”

The program is web-based, so bar-coded labels are placed on the shelf or bin to automate the order. This helps to eliminate overstocking, since restocking levels are set ahead of time. It also helps to identify non-moving inventory.

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“Because it’s web-based, we’re able to run reports to see what’s moving, how often the customer is buying it, and what the opportunities are,” says Laurie. “The bottom line is an automated process that is more streamlined and cost efficient for the customer.” □

To find out more about Acklands-Grainger’s fastener offering, visit [acklandsgrainger.com](http://acklandsgrainger.com), or contact your Acklands-Grainger account manager or the Acklands-Grainger branch near you.