

Dasco Storage Solutions

Headquartered in Brampton, Ontario, Dasco Storage Solutions designs and manufactures secure and durable storage products for customers across a range of industries in which security is of the utmost importance.

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| Headquarters | 346 Orenda Road, Brampton, Ontario, L6T 1G1 |
| Year Established | 1963 |
| NAICS | 337215 - Showcase, partition, shelving and locker manufacturing |
| Employees | 49 |
| Major Expansions | 1987 |
| Exports | US, New Zealand, EU, Asia-Pacific |
| Parent Company | VAST Industrial Corporation |
| Other Locations | N/A |

Only the most trusted storage equipment manufacturers are approached to supply products for industries in which security is of the utmost importance, such as law enforcement and national defense. Headquartered in Brampton, Ontario, Dasco Storage Solutions (Dasco) designs and manufactures secure and durable storage products for customers across a wide range of these types of industries. The company's ability to consistently meet exact customer specifications has resulted in Dasco establishing a reputation as one of the most reliable providers of storage equipment in Canada and around the world.

Established in 1963, Dasco was originally a data accessory distributor with a catalogue that included hundreds of products. However, the emergence of Staples and other large suppliers of office equipment and accessories provided the impetus for the company to change its business model. Systematic Tool and Die, a metal fabricator located adjacent to Dasco, purchased the firm in 1985. Dasco shifted to the production of steel cabinets, with a focus on products that were adjustable and customizable. In 2012, VAST Industrial Corporation (VAST) acquired Dasco and helped the firm grow further as a supplier of storage equipment for niche industries, reducing its product catalogue to only 20 pages.

VAST is an Ontario-based holding company that makes strategic investments in the manufacturing industry to assist with firm growth, product innovation, and continuous improvement. Since it was founded in 2016, VAST has acquired Dasco, GSS Lockers (GSS), Canada Stampings, and Unilux VFC. Having a common owner has resulted in the four firms collaborating, rather than competing, with one another. For example, although GSS and Dasco manufacture similar products, the two firms share large purchase orders to capitalize on each other's respective competitive advantages and skills. This has benefited Dasco because it

allows the firm to accept larger purchase orders from customers and increase the pace of its already rapid growth.

VAST also has “universal” employees and resources that are available to all four firms. Examples include investment capital and additional specialized staff to support large purchase orders. VAST also capitalizes on economies of scale by having employees such as marketing and IT specialists available to all four firms, rather than requiring each firm to hire these employees full-time. Along with the other firms, Dasco benefits greatly from the cost savings that result from having these employees available on an as-needed basis.

To increase its capacity as it continued to grow, Dasco completed a 40,000 square foot addition to its facility in 1987, increasing the size of its facility to 90,000 square feet.

The firm utilizes its production space effectively, developing consistent processes and an efficient workflow in the facility. Approximately 80 percent of products manufactured by Dasco are designed for weapon or gear storage while most of the remaining 20 percent are used for data storage. Dasco’s relationship with GSS has resulted in GSS focusing more intently on steel manufacturing and product assembly, while Dasco utilizes its expertise by focusing on engineering and wiring components.

Until the mid-2000s, approximately 90 percent of Dasco’s sales were in Canada. Today, exports to Australia, New Zealand, Asia, and the EU account for more than 65 percent of sales. Dasco is proud that the growth in its international markets has not come at the expense of its domestic presence, as the firm has successfully retained and grown its Canadian customer base in the midst of its expansion to international markets. As it continues to grow, Dasco will further implement the use of just-in-time manufacturing to minimize the amount of inventory that it keeps at its Brampton facility.

All products manufactured by Dasco meet precise specifications and are extremely durable, enabling the firm to focus on improving the quality and capabilities of existing products rather than servicing existing ones.

Dasco believes that its quality product and dedicated staff will result in new customer relationships, both domestically and abroad. While the firm’s engineers continue to meet and exceed customer expectations, the sales team ensures customer satisfaction to maximize customer retention. Foreign federal governments and police forces, primarily in Europe and Asia, are Dasco’s largest international customers. The firm’s recent growth is driven largely by a 5-year contract that Dasco received from the French Ministry of Defense.

Despite their exceptional reputation, Dasco faces competition, primarily from US-based companies. However, Dasco is the largest weapon storage supplier in Canada, and has effectively increased its sales by growing its international presence in regions outside of the U.S. Dasco typically sells directly to its Canadian customers but has chosen to utilize a distributor network for its exports.

Dasco currently employs 49 people, including 15 office and 34 production staff across two shifts. Production staff include welders, assemblers, packagers, laser cutters, and powder coating line operators. The firm supports its staff and offers flexibility with respect to work schedules, which contributes to a family-oriented environment. Dasco believes that this positive workplace environment is the reason for the lengthy tenure of the firm's employees, some of whom have been with the firm for as long as 41 years.

Hiring new workers is one of the challenges being addressed by Dasco, especially because of its location in Brampton. Given the high cost of housing in the GTA, Dasco is forced to improve the wages and benefits that it offers potential employees to attract employees. Another component involves promoting from within by providing training on specific machinery to existing employees, which helps advance their skills. Dasco also hires extensively from communities of new Canadians, and finds that many of these employees fit well into the family-oriented culture of the workplace. Recently, Dasco has developed a relationship with Sheridan College to gain access to recent graduates of their skilled trades programs, and has partnered with Sheridan to bring on an intern. The student helped set up the ABB welding robot – the same machine Sheridan used in class – to create a welding station. Since then, Sheridan students have helped Dasco program robotic welding fixtures and have saved Dasco over \$100,000 in programming and fixturing costs. One of these students is now a full-time employee.

Moving forward, Dasco will continue to grow with the support of various government grants and programs. In the past, the firm has used the Scientific Research and Experimental Development tax incentive and other grants to perform research and development projects. Rather than patenting its products and technology, Dasco continuously develops new and innovative products to stay at the forefront of the industry and ahead of the competition. Management understands that to effectively utilize this strategy, being first-to-market with new product features and technology is of paramount importance. Dasco develops relationships with customers beforehand and ensures that its first-to-market with any new product.