

GSS Lockers

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Headquarters	2995 Page Street, London, Ontario, N5V 4P6
Year Established	1992
NAICS	337215 - Showcase, partition, shelving and locker manufacturing
Employees	37
Major Expansions	-
Exports	-
Parent Company	VAST Industrial Corp
Other Locations	-

Located in London, Ontario, GSS Lockers (GSS) manufactures high-quality, durable, and innovative storage lockers for a wide range of applications. The firm is proud of its ability to supply customers with lockers that fit their exact needs, largely because the lockers were designed and manufactured with a specific end-use in mind. GSS's desire to remain at the forefront of the industry and become known as the best and most reliable locker manufacturer in Canada motivates the company to continue innovating and developing new products.

Before it began manufacturing lockers, the company was part of GSW, a larger firm that specialized in building water heaters and related equipment. In 1992, GSS manufactured its first locker and subsequently changed its name to GSS Lockers, becoming an independent entity. Since then, GSS has developed an extensive product line that includes 10 unique storage systems and 10 different types of lockers that can be used for specific applications.

GSS is able to consistently manufacture a high-quality product because of its vertically integrated production process.

Four years ago, GSS was acquired by VAST Industrial Corp. (VAST), an Ontario-based holding company that was founded in 2016. VAST specializes in strategic investments in manufacturing to assist with firm growth, product innovation and continuous improvement. Since the acquisition, GSS has developed a positive

working relationship with another company owned by VAST, Dasco Storage Solutions (Dasco). Rather than competing with one another because they offer similar products, GSS and Dasco collaborate and capitalize on each other's strengths so that both companies can grow together. VAST supports these collaborations with resources, which greatly benefits GSS. Examples of these beneficial resources include investment capital, additional labour when large purchase orders are submitted, and access to VAST employees such as marketing and IT specialists.

GSS is able to consistently manufacture a high-quality product because of its vertically integrated production process. After the firm receives a steel shipment, it can bend, cut, and form the doors, bodies, and trim of the lockers in-house. After the locker components are manufactured, they go through the firm's powder coating line before being packaged and prepared for shipping. Although there is minimal automation at the plant due to the nature of the production process and small purchase orders, GSS frequently invests in new equipment that translate into improvements in product quality.

Sourcing materials and equipment from Ontario as frequently as possible is another reason that GSS believes it is able to consistently produce high-quality lockers. The owner of VAST is a proud Canadian and strives to support the local economy as much as possible. This has resulted in GSS developing strong relationships with local suppliers and building a reliable domestic supply chain.

Across Canada, Federal offices are opting for on-demand storage for employees that reduce overall contact. The E-Locker is perfect for this application.

Rather than selling directly to the end-consumer, GSS capitalizes on a Canada-wide distributor network so that it can reach a larger pool of potential customers. There are only a few other locker manufacturers who supply a product of comparable quality to GSS. Competing on affordable shipping costs is where the majority of GSS's competition occurs, as the firm's competitors are located across Canada and sometimes have a geographic advantage when supplying product to a customer. Lower shipping costs is the primary reason that GSS has experienced the greatest success in Ontario. However, the firm is looking into methods that would allow it to expand into the U.S. while still offering its product at an affordable price.

GSS's customers vary depending on the type of locker that is being purchased, given their unique applications. For example, Canadian Federal Government offices are the biggest customer for the new E-Locker. Across Canada, Federal offices are opting for on-demand storage for employees that reduce overall contact. The E-Locker is perfect for this application. Employees can approach the lockers and either enter a PIN or tap their employee cards to gain access. While the E-Locker typically is not used in police stations, GSS has created an evidence locker that is a best-seller for police stations. The evidence locker has storage compartments that can be kept secure with a padlock, slam lock, or electronic lock. There is also a pass-through system that allows evidence to be deposited through one door and collected through a gate at the rear.

The ability of GSS to design and manufacture custom products has resulted in the firm supplying products to other companies owned by VAST. Custom orders for these companies comprise approximately 50% of the new business that GSS has generated since being acquired by VAST.

GSS employs 37 persons, comprised of five full-time office staff and two shifts of 16 production workers. There is very low turnover at GSS, which has led to the firm benefiting from an experienced workforce. Moving forward, a priority of GSS is to ensure that the 30 – 40 years of manufacturing experience acquired by the majority of its workforce is transferred to the firm’s next generation of manufacturing employees.

Certain occupations, such as welders and brake press operators, are extremely important to GSS’s manufacturing operation. Individuals who have the appropriate skills to fill these positions are becoming increasingly more difficult to find. To address this challenge, GSS often hires mechanically inclined persons and trains them in-house on specific machines. The firm attracts the majority of its new workers through engagement with London’s South American communities and collaboration with Fanshawe College, participating in the college’s job fair and summer student program.

Moving forward, GSS will focus on innovative product development to create new products that provide custom solutions for a diverse range of customer segments. For example, GSS’s most recent product, the E-locker, allowed the firm to enter the condominium market and corporate office storage market. The E-locker has alarm capabilities, electronic access control, and can even track usage statistics. By soliciting customer feedback, GSS was able to create a locker that met the needs of corporate offices for personal storage. They have had many great reviews and lots of new interest. They are continuing to innovate with new software and hardware changes launching mid-2021.