



JONATHAN WINSLOW, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

From left to right: Juan Acosta, 36, Craig Koehly, 53, Lana Leonhardt, 51, Drew Leonhardt, 52, Dina Koehly, 51, and owner Bill Leonhardt, 79, all work together at Powertron Battery Company.

51 YEARS OF BATTERY POWER

The family behind the Powertron Battery Company has been dealing in batteries for four generations.

BY JONATHAN WINSLOW
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For 51 years, Bill Leonhardt has been selling batteries in Santa Ana while growing both his business and his family.

Powertron Battery Company traces its origins back to the time Leonhardt spent with his father in Washington, where the two designed and built homes and started a battery manufacturing business.

Eventually, Leonhardt made his way to California, where he decided to continue doing what he knew best. He found an available lot of land, built a building to house his business, and started the Powertron Battery Company in Santa Ana.

WHAT IT SELLS

Initially, Powertron manufactured batteries, but the fast-moving battery business made continuing that

impossible.

"Years ago, there were only 20 or 30 sizes that we had to worry about," said Leonhardt, 79. "Now there's over 400; there's no way a little company can keep up."

Though it no longer manufactures batteries, Powertron has become known for selling them at comparatively low prices, thanks to the low overhead from owning the building.

Much of Powertron's business comes from uninterruptible power supply (UPS) batteries, which data centers need to keep their systems up should their power go out. Powertron has UPS customers across the nation and ship large quantities to them every month.

"When you go to the bank and they say it'll be a minute because their computers are down, that means there's batteries working

out there somewhere to get those things up and running again," said Leonhardt.

Powertron prides itself on service and experience. Walk-in customers can have their car batteries inspected for free. If they need a new one, they can opt to either pay Powertron to install it, or they're welcome to borrow Powertron's tools to do the job themselves. Additionally, any automotive batteries purchased at Powertron can be recharged for free, to a certain point.

A FAMILY LEGACY

In the '70s, Leonhardt's son, Drew Leonhardt, and daughter, Dina Koehly, joined him in running Powertron; they later brought in their spouses Lana Leonhardt and Craig Koehly. Today, Leonhardt's grandchildren can also be found helping out at the shop, meaning that the Leonhardt family has been in batteries for four generations.

Leonhardt says that the trick to staying in business

so long is keeping one's eyes open for opportunity and niches.

"It's just like the restaurant business – you'd think there's enough Mexican restaurants out there, but then Chipotle comes up with a new idea," Leonhardt said. "There's always that opportunity, you've just got to be one step ahead and make it for yourself."

Powertron Battery Company

Address: 2218 W. 2nd St., behind Dino's Burgers

Hours: 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, closed Sunday

Phone: 1-800-400-4858 (toll free); 714-543-4858 (local)

Website: powertronbatteryco.com