

# MEET STARTEX

*This Texas company aims to use its recent acquisition  
by Nexeo Solutions to bring more private label  
paint products to retailers.*



Since 1984, paint contractors and consumers across the nation have turned to a Texas-born brand to finish their projects better, faster and for less money.

Three decades and one new owner later, the Startex team is primed to continue this Lone Star legacy of high-quality solvents, thinners, paint strippers and cleaners.

The Startex story began as an initiative by Chemical Specialists and Development, Inc. (CSD) in the small town of Cut and Shoot, Texas. To serve local paint stores, CSD offered speedy delivery, a local sales team and the ability to make small batches of private-label product. That successful model enabled the business to expand to national retail chains and purchase a larger, more capable production facility a few miles west, in the city of Conroe, Texas.

As the years continued, the Startex label continued to increase in market share and CSD added production capabilities. This caught the attention of Nexeo Solutions, a large chemical distributor, whose corporate headquarters are just minutes south of Conroe. As talks of an acquisition began, both sides agreed on a common goal: Sustain the legacy of value and goodwill tied to the Startex brand.

To fulfill this goal, both organizations turned to their core competencies and foundational capabilities. As a global company, Nexeo Solutions provided CSD scale and reach with access to serve more than 27,000 customers with more than 100 North American facilities, 300 delivery

trucks and 13,000 products. Reciprocally, CSD offered a key advantage and growth driver missing at Nexeo Solutions: a trusted consumer brand and the ability to make private-label products as small as half an ounce.

“We had a small team that had been selling the same products to the same customers for over a decade,” said Shawn Becker, corporate account manager for Startex. “Our business was dialed in, and we were frankly very nervous about what changes would come after being acquired by Nexeo Solutions.”

This situation was entirely new for Nexeo Solutions. Formerly known as Ashland Distribution Company and part of Ashland Inc., Nexeo Solutions began as an independent organization in 2011. Uniting teams and embracing change takes strategy, so Nexeo Solutions made a decision to build upon Startex’s existing business model.

“Startex did an amazing job servicing Gulf region customers with five salespeople and two-day deliveries out of Conroe,” said Mike Bliss, business director for Startex. “We wanted to provide the same experience to retailers across North America.”

Over time, the Startex team more than doubled its number of technical sellers, added two production facilities and started inventorying Startex products in Nexeo Solutions locations from Los Angeles to Atlanta, and from Edmonton to Toronto. But increasing scale was just the start.

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new VOC regulations. We had to do more to help them differentiate themselves and expand their profitability,” said Bliss. The team engaged Nexeo Solutions’ research and development chemists to expand their product portfolio, starting with a new low-VOC line of products. “Thanks to Paul Lewis, Technical Manager, we now have

“We have added a full line of VOC-compliant products, paint strippers, adhesive removers, part cleaners, hand cleaners and towels, and graffiti removers since the acquisition,” said Becker. “Our team is even better positioned to continue growing with our channel partners and new private-label accounts.”



a full line of easy-to-choose, VOC-compliant solvents that lead the industry in high performance,” said Bliss.

While working on new labels, Startex upgraded all of its labels to make them more consumer-friendly and available for international use in Canada. Doing so enabled Startex to better serve international retailers by providing access to products that could be sold anywhere in North America, helping to minimize inventory and simplify supply chains.

Today, Startex is piloting next-day case-quantity deliveries in Southern California, pushing innovative new products through their research and development pipeline and capitalizing on new media to create demand for their retail partners. Going forward, this once small-town Texas brand will now do more than ever to help their retailer partners be the preferred destination for contractors and consumers.

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