



From a Minneapolis Garage to a Global Manufacturer: Graco Marks 100 Years of Resilience

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Graco's century-long journey weathered depression, war and disruption by adapting to what customers needed next, a model that continues to shape its future

MINNEAPOLIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Apr. 16, 2026-- A century ago, in the depths of a Minnesota winter, a downtown Minneapolis parking lot attendant named Russell Gray grew fed up with grease guns that froze, failed, and injured workers while servicing cars.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20260416878044/en/>



Graco's first salesmen, Wade Jones (left) and Jim Sampson (right), don white lab coats during a Graco equipment demonstration in 1929.

That frustration, and a belief that work should be safer and more reliable, resulted in the invention of an air-powered grease gun that solved a real customer problem, launching Graco Inc. This month, Graco marks its 100th anniversary as a \$2 billion

global industrial technology company.

Founded in 1926 as Gray Company, Graco has expanded from its early roots in fluid-handling pumps for the automobile industry to moving viscous fluids and powders across mining, consumer products, transportation, agriculture, electronics, home improvement and construction sectors, to name a few.

The company is notable for its ability to adapt through some of the most turbulent chapters of modern history, from the Great Depression and World War II to oil crises, globalization, and recessions. While few companies reach their centennial with relevance intact, fewer can explain why they lasted. For Graco, the answer is resilience rooted in customer-led innovation.

A COMPANY THAT ADAPTED AS THE WORLD CHANGED

As global events reshaped industry, Graco reshaped itself.

"Over the last 100 years, Graco has faced the same economic, political, and global challenges that tested every company," said Mark W. Sheahan, Graco President and CEO. "What carried us through was not luck. It was an unwavering focus on solving real customer problems and adapting to the world as it evolved, decade by decade."

During World War II, Graco adjusted its production lines to support the Allied war effort, manufacturing rugged lubrication equipment that helped keep vehicles, tanks, and aircraft operating under punishing conditions.

In the postwar boom, as Americans bought homes, appliances, and consumer goods, Graco expanded beyond lubrication into pumps and systems that helped factories move paints, adhesives, sealants, and hard-to-move manufacturing fluids at scale.

As manufacturing globalized, the company grew with it, combining organic innovation with disciplined acquisitions. Today, Graco sells its products in more than 100 countries around the world, with offices and factories on six continents.

Graco's century-long run offers a lesson in diversified growth through disruption. Rather than chasing short-term growth, the company remained focused on expanding capabilities and industries while staying anchored to core manufacturing expertise.

GRACO TOUCHES LIVES EVERY DAY AROUND THE WORLD

Some people know Graco by name, others by the paint sprayers in their garage. Much of the company's impact, however, happens behind the scenes, inside factories, on construction sites, and throughout the systems that quietly keep modern life moving.

Graco equipment helps paint homes, cars, airplanes, and landmarks. It stripes roads, bridges, parking lots, and sports fields. It dispenses food products like peanut butter and chocolate, and applies adhesives that hold cars, electronics, and packaging together. Behind those moments are systems that move, measure and control fluids and powders with precision, helping customers improve efficiency, enhance safety and deliver consistent results.

Graco's technology is embedded in modern life, often out of sight, but everywhere in use.

MINNESOTA ROOTS, GLOBAL IMPACT

What began as a two-brother startup in Minneapolis now employs thousands worldwide, while remaining deeply rooted in Minnesota. Graco has been shaped by generations of long-tenured employees, many from the same families, who share the founding values of Russell Gray: a deeply practical belief that work should be easier, safer, and done right.

The values of the company extend beyond business and into its hometown communities. Through the Graco Foundation, the company has contributed more than \$50 million since 1986 to STEM education, workforce development, and youth programs, investing in the next generation of engineers, technicians, and skilled workers.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE NEXT CENTURY OF MANUFACTURING

As manufacturing enters a new era, Graco is positioning itself for what comes next.

“Our future will be guided by the same principles that shaped our past,” Sheahan said. “Engineering dependable products designed to last, investing in people, and staying relentlessly focused on our customers’ toughest challenges. That is how we have endured and how we will continue to grow.”

The company is investing in automation, data-driven systems, artificial intelligence and more sustainable operations to drive productivity and growth for customers.

Throughout 2026, Graco will commemorate its centennial with celebrations across its global facilities, recognizing employees, customers, and partners who have helped define its first 100 years and shape its next.

For more on Graco’s centennial, visit [graco.com/100years](https://www.graco.com/100years).

ABOUT GRACO

Graco Inc. supplies technology and expertise for the management of fluids and coatings in both industrial and commercial applications. It designs, manufactures and markets systems and equipment to move, measure, control, dispense and spray fluid and powder materials. A recognized leader in its specialties, Minneapolis-based Graco serves customers around the world in the manufacturing, processing, construction, and maintenance industries. For additional information about Graco Inc., please visit us at www.graco.com.

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