

## Todd Cerny named plant manager at Thermo King Hastings

By Jose Perez, HEDC/Chamber Director of Marketing and Promotions

---

HASTINGS — Longtime Thermo King employee Todd Cerny is taking the lead at the Hastings plant as their new plant manager. As he steps into his new role, Cerny says his focus is clear: grow Thermo King’s Hastings facility while continuing to invest in the people and community that have supported it for more than four decades.

Cerny, who previously served as operations manager, now leads a facility that plays a key role in Trane Technologies’ transport refrigeration business. As production demand is expected to rise, he said, sustaining stability while developing talent will be critical to the plant’s long-term success.

“We want to be a place where people choose to work every day,” Cerny said when speaking to the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corporation. “Our goal is to be the best place to work while continuing to deliver as a manufacturer.”

About 440 employees currently work at the Hastings plant, including roughly 50 salaried staff in roles such as engineering, purchasing, and human resources. The remaining workforce consists of hourly employees in positions ranging from assembly to welding and paint operations. Cerny said staffing levels have fluctuated in recent years, with employment surpassing 500 during peak production periods.

To support future growth, Cerny presented several recruitment and workforce development strategies. The plant hosts a summer internship program, typically bringing in six engineering students from mid-May through early August. The program focuses on direct experience while also helping interns connect with the Hastings community.

Thermo King also partners with regional educational institutions to build a pipeline of trained workers. Those partnerships include Central Community College for welding recruitment and the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology for engineering interns and early-career hires.



**Todd Cerny, the new plant manager of Thermo King in Hastings. (Photo by Jose Perez).**

“We’ve had strong success with students from the South Dakota School of Mines,” Cerny said. “Many come from small communities and are looking for that same environment. They connect well with Hastings and become engaged in the community.”

In addition, the company utilizes internal development programs such as the Accelerated Development Program and Trane Technologies’ Plant Manager Development Program, which Cerny completed, to prepare future leaders in manufacturing, finance, and operations.

Cerny said internal advancement remains an important focus. He pointed to employees who have worked their way up through the organization as examples of what can be done.

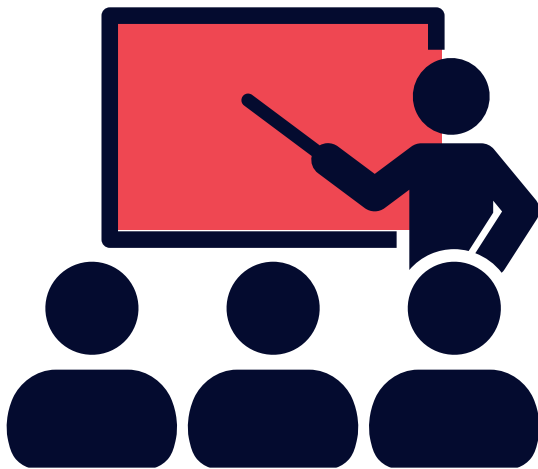
“We want to continue developing our talent within,” he said. “That long-term investment in our people is critical to our success.” Community involvement is also central to the plant’s identity.

Thermo King Hastings supports and participates in a wide range of local initiatives, including school tours, Leadership Hastings, the Adams County Fair, United Way campaigns, and community parades.

Employees also participate in charity golf events, host blood drives in partnership with the American Red Cross, and work with local manufacturing groups to strengthen connections between schools and industry. “We strive to be present and involved in the community,” Cerny said. “This is where many of us have built our lives. It’s important that we give back.”

Cerny said programs such as Leadership Hastings played a key role in his development and encouraged emerging leaders to seek similar opportunities to build networks and expand their skills. A graduate of Leadership Hastings, Cerny said the program helped him broaden his professional connections and acquire experiences that prepared him for management.

“Take advantage of opportunities to grow,” he said. “Creating a strong network is just as important as developing your skills.”



Cerny said aspiring leaders should not shy away from roles involving people management or unfamiliar responsibilities. Thinking about an important moment in his career, when he accepted a supervisory role without prior management experience, he pointed out the importance of requesting advice.

“When you step into something new, you’re not on your own,” Cerny said. “Contact, ask questions, and learn from others — both within your organization and beyond.” He also stressed the value of continuous development and resilience, pointing to a mindset embraced at the Hastings plant. “We focus on learning quickly from challenges,” Cerny said. “When you learn from mistakes, you’re better prepared moving forward.”

Going forward, Cerny said he hopes to be remembered for delivering stability, strengthening community relationships, and building a long-term future for both the plant and its employees.

Cerny, who advanced through engineering and operations roles before taking on the leadership position, said his vision is centered on creating consistent opportunities for employees while deepening the plant connection to Hastings.

“My goal is to provide consistency and permanence — not just for the plant, but for the community as well,” he said.

Cerny said he wants to bring a long-term approach to the role, comparing it to what he described as shorter tenures among some past plant managers. “I grew up in Nebraska, and I’ve made Hastings my home,” he said. “I want to be part of building something here for the long term.”

A key part of that vision, he said, is investing in internal development. Cerny pointed to employees who have advanced from hourly positions into leadership roles as examples of the plant’s potential to grow talent from within.

“We want to continue developing our people and creating opportunities for them to advance,” he said. Cerny also pointed out the importance of public participation, citing his personal connection to Hastings — where he met his wife and raised his children — as a driving force behind his devotion.



“This is home,” he said. “I couldn’t imagine being anywhere else.”

He said the plant’s long-term success is closely tied to its role in the community, with ongoing involvement in local organizations, schools, and workforce initiatives.

Going forward, Cerny said his goal is to ensure Thermo King stays in a strong presence in Hastings for decades to come.

“We want to be here for the next 45 years,” he said. “That’s what drives us.”

Cerny added that stability and sustained expansion are not only organizational priorities but also a template for future leaders. “That path is there for young engineers and future managers,” he said. “This is a place where you can build a career and make an impact.”