

Powell Valves: Celebrating

Since their foundation in 1846, The Wm Powell Company (Powell Valves) has stood at the forefront of innovation. They have been a leader in pioneering technology in the industrial valve market, providing valves to NASA and being Thomas Edison's valve of choice to being a leader in fugitive emission technology. The company has a rich history of achievements that has resulted in their continued success over the past 173 years.

Valve World Americas spoke to Executive Vice President David B. "Brandy" Cowart and Vice President Sales Mike Donoghue, from their headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio, to learn about the company's evolution and growth, the importance of proactivity and their investment in combating fugitive emissions.



By Sarah Bradley

Having endured through the civil and world wars, dedicating their production to the U.S. military, rebuilding after great floods, surviving the Great Depression and helping to put men on the moon, Powell Valves has proven their ability to evolve and react to customer needs in the changing world market. By providing best-in-class products in design features and quality, at competitive prices with excellent service, on-time deliveries and flexibility, Powell has continued to maintain its thriving position in the valve world.

"We have integrity in everything we do and we do the right thing. We may be a smaller company, but we have big

company resources, opportunities, possibilities and capabilities. It allows us to be nimble and take advantage of the opportunities that are presented," Brandy Cowart explained. "Being proactive versus reactive is huge. If you are too entrenched in, then you are forced to be reactive. By being flexible, nimble and quick, we are able to get ahead in meeting our customers' needs which is our core focus."

The flexibility and speed to react to their customer and industry needs are attributes which have served them well in the past, in the present, and will continue in the future. As a privately-held, family owned corporation, Powell is able to continue to build on their legacy of innovation and family-style company culture.

"As our industry becomes more global we have decided to not only focus on

our loyal distributors, but to focus an equal amount of attention on the end-user and the processes that come before. In other words, we want to make sure we have a direct connection to exchange information, engineering expertise, factual data, traceability, manufacturing, ownership," said Mike Donoghue. "We want to make sure we are talking to the end users, visiting them, to ensure that they know that they are directly partnering with Powell Valves, as they are ordering through a service channel. This strategy further enhances our distributor service channel relationships and creates a Win-Win-Win."

Company Culture

"Customer First, Positive Energy, Teamwork, Performance, Adaptability & Flexibility and Integrity are the cornerstones of our company culture. As a family-owned business we greatly value our employees and through them we are able to extend our family environment to our customers and our supply chain. It has been like that for a long time - my father, Randy Cowart, is only the ninth CEO & President of the company. Nine presidents in 173 years is pretty unique - we have competitors who have had that many presidents in the last several years. The stability, integrity and family values held throughout the company means that our employees have a lot of pride in their work," said Brandy.

Powell believes that every employee, from front door to shipping dock, is an entrepreneur and that every daily task performed touches a customer. That belief, and culture, is evident from the CEO all the way throughout the organization.

Powell's longevity and sustainability stem from the company's strong culture, and ability to take risks. Their financial strength and stability allows the company to react to customer's needs swiftly. The company leadership executes plans and strategic objectives in order to service the customer and grow their market share.

One of the ways that Powell has been utilizing their strong company culture, and employee commitment, is through their recent investments in further defining their project management groups and encouraging greater involvement

from staff at all levels. The company has put a number of proactive communication tools in place throughout the capital project supply chain. Their goal is to make that project management process more transparent for the manufacturer, distributor, EPC and the end user. Their Proactive Order Management and Milestone Reporting deliver real-time accurate information that assists with keeping capital projects on time and on budget.

Powell has a strong focus to their customers' availability of product information and digital availability of information. Powell has made several updates to their website to ensure a superior visitor experience both from desktop and mobile devices. Powell Valves website won a Gold Award in the Manufacturing Website Category in the 2019 AVA Digital Awards.

First in Fugitive Emissions

Powell's rich history brings unparalleled knowledge and experience. As a pioneer in the industry, the Wm Powell Company has always focused heavily on innovation and being a company of "firsts". "Powell was one of the first to really be committed to the control of fugitive emissions, both financially and by actually getting the products through the individual product testing. There are a lot of folks in the industry that say "me too!" We jumped in there very early with our partnership with Chesterton for packing to make sure we were providing our customers with the best options, before they knew it was necessary," said Brandy.

Investing in fugitive emission technology is important to Powell. The company achieved yet another industry "first" by completing testing and having an inventory of finished goods on the shelf. Having product that exceeds the API624 standard helps their customers migrate through the new emission regulations.

Despite the issues many have encountered with the economic downturns, Powell's diversity has allowed them to continually grow. Powell recognized early on the importance of diversification, not only in the products they develop, but in the markets, industries and customer bases they serve.

"I think having a diverse customer base



Over 170 Years of Innovation

has been one of the big success points of the company. Through the years there have been some tough economic cycles in one industry or another - be it oil, power, chemical or paper. Very rarely are all of those industries on the downward slope economically at the same time. Having a diverse customer base in so many different industries has allowed us to maintain consistent growth," revealed Brandy. "A lot of our products are standard but can be tailored/upgraded for different industries with our immense engineering support and manufacturing expertise behind it. That product diversity, the engineering capabilities and the diversity in our customer base is a big foundation for our success as compared to competitors who focus on one industry; they live and die by the success of that industry."

Completing the package through new product introductions, July of 2017 marked another milestone in Powell's NextGen Engineering Technology strategy. The company launched a complete quarter-turn resilient seat butterfly and soft seat ball valve offering of one piece, two piece and three piece as well as flanged with size ranges from ½" through to 12" inclusive of Fire Safe. Powell's long-term strategy is to continue to layer on products that assist their channel partners complete the package not only for their day-to-day MRO customers, but for the large capital projects. Future products of quarter-turn automation and cryogenic ball valves are being introduced by leveraging 173 years of valve innovation and quality to position Powell and Powell Channel Partners for success with the valve end user community.

"We have added two new product categories - floating ball valves and resilient seated butterfly valves. We exited those markets 40 years ago and now we are re-entering those markets because of the demand from our customer base; they are looking for more products from a single manufacturing source," explained Brandy. "This brings a wider product scope under one stock order which results in freight savings and administrative cost savings. These two new product categories are in very mature and competitive marketplaces and our brand, expertise and engineering behind those products has been well-received in the marketplace."

Recognizing the changing demands of the industry, Powell Valves has always made strides to ensure that they listen to their customers' needs, look for the upcoming voids in the industry and develop ways to proactively fulfill the requirements before their customers even realize the need is there.

"As an engineering based company, R&D is one of our foundations. Even though there are governing bodies that control a lot of the design parameters, there are still areas where we are able to maximize material cost, machining efficiencies and tolerances," Brandy revealed. "There are developments in the sand casting processes that continue to evolve, producing a better cosmetic and overall quality. There are casting processes that are being used today that were not available three years ago and the end users and manufacturers are benefiting from that. There is a cost to the design work and upgrading of patterning equipment that you have to consistently provide attention and resourc-



es." Powell has a corporate engineering team in Cincinnati along with engineering teams in their manufacturing plants. Powell's valve engineering has always been a leader in the industry with a heritage of writing the foundation of many of the specifications in use today.

Another foundation of success is Powell's high-quality supply chain. Our casting, forging and component suppliers are among the best in the industry and we have total alignment and commitment to each other.

Commitment to Clean Room Capabilities

Acknowledging the growth in the industrial gas and LNG markets, Powell has recently made significant investments in cryogenic clean room and testing facilities. Powell has continued to invest in machinery, training, inventory and infrastructure at all of their locations in China and the United States.

"We continue to invest in our manufacturing, testing and machining equipment. Building cryogenic clean rooms at both of our forge steel and cast steel, large and small bore plants in Wenzhou and Yangcheng City, China, was an important investment for our customers," said Brandy. "It is something we are able to provide that many of our competitors cannot. There is a huge growth in the industrial gases market and we want to be able to properly serve them. Many of the major players in industrial gases have their new construction taking place in China and being there and being able to facilitate that growth allows Powell to be an industry leader."

These state-of-the-art facilities supplement the facilities they have established in the United States from a cryogenic cleaning perspective. They now have four global cryogenic clean rooms.

strategy, a good channel infrastructure and competitive brands.

Global Presence

Having a global presence is another way that the company has continued to remain competitive and successful in an industry that is fast-paced with urgent needs to be met worldwide. Powell has continued to invest in growing their reach around the world by establishing manufacturing and distribution centers in China to support sales throughout Asia and better service the Middle East. Recognizing the importance of a global infrastructure in support of their business. By establishing a distribution facility in Houston, Texas in 2014, Powell has positioned itself in the center of the valve industry in order to further support same-day emergency services for its customers and provide another contact point for its clients.

"The Houston and Gulf Coast market is really the hotbed of the valve industry. Rather than having our product a day away, we wanted it to be 15 minutes away. We established the facility in Stafford and stocked it up with inventory so our products are at-hand for our customers. That was one of those customer first decisions - listening to our customers and what their needs were. They are going to run into materials that they need this afternoon, today, now and we are in a position to satisfy their needs," said Brandy.

That commitment to better serving the customer and striving to be the best solutions-provider for their clients has been a driving factor in all the developments, investments and efforts Powell has made over its lengthy existence.

"Just saying the customer comes first may sound cliché, but really that is the focus of everything that we are doing. Taking risks and making investments is all driving to provide a better service, a better cost base and better quality for the customer. We want to be the customer's favorite place to call and we want them to call us first," revealed Brandy. "You think about how simple that philosophy is in our daily lives - I want to go a store over another because of the service, the company integrity and the personal service they provide to you as an individual customer. That is the kind of attitude and company that we want to be. Being a private company allows us to do that without getting clogged by some corporate initiatives. We come in every day looking for an opportunity to better service our customers."

There are many changes in that industry as far as metallurgy and cleaning requirements and the changing needs of their customers drove that investment.

"We also have two clean rooms in our Manning and Orangeburg, South Carolina facilities. Having clean rooms at two facilities here and two facilities in China allows us to take all of our product line and service those customers with clean product needs in the industrial gas and LNG industry globally," said Mike. "Many of our competitors do not have the capabilities of actually machining metal here in the United States and rely on a third-party source. With the heritage that we have as a U.S.A. company, we take great pride in the development of our investments in the United States."

In addition to manufacturing and modification facilities, Powell continues to maintain a large inventory around the world to ensure that their products are readily available wherever their customers are. The company looks for channel partners that have a defined



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