

Late one Friday afternoon near the end of a turnaround at a refinery in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, the turnaround team realized they had a problem. A group of valves they were not planning to service, needed to be replaced – immediately.

By Sarah Bradley



A customer performs a remote product inspection and testing at the MRC Global Singapore Valve Engineering Center.

## MRC Global celebrates 100 years in business

**T**he refinery sent an urgent request for help to their Houston-based team, who contacted their MRC Global Executive Account Manager. He immediately got the Supply Chain Management team involved to source the valve. It was Friday late afternoon in Houston, TX. However, the team scoured MRC Global's inventory and contacted manufacturers and, ultimately, identified a set of valves in the UK stock that would fit the need with some modifications.

At this point, it was 10:30 pm in the UK. Still, when the text message from the Executive Account Manager pinged on Mick Hudson's phone, the UK general sales manager put the wheels in

motion to deliver the solution in what seemed like an impossible schedule.

MRC Global's European teams didn't waste any time. The UK team identified the best solution and prepared it for the customer's approval. After acquiring the PO, two 8" class 1500 valves in duplex material were pulled from the UK stock. The flanges required modification and were sent to a local engineering company to design and manufacture the specific mounting hardware to suit the customer's existing actuators. Then the package was shipped to the MRC Global Regional Distribution Center in Bleiswijk, the Netherlands, where the Valve Engineering Team was waiting for delivery



at 6:00 Wednesday morning to assemble the valve packages with the customer's actuators, function test it, and inspect it with the customer. Finally, the package was delivered to the refinery for installation. All of this was accomplished in three working days.

"The valves they needed are a minimum of a 20-week lead time," Mick explained. "We were giving the customer literally hour-by-hour updates throughout the weekend because it was such an urgent need for them. So, being able to identify a solution from within our stock and have the technical knowledge to assure the customer that the modification we made would meet their existing specifications in that amount of time was incredible."

The job didn't stop there, though. The refinery also needed two 6" class 1500 ball valves I duplex material. So, the MRC Global

team got together and made magic happen again, in another astounding three-day time period.

"It was a global effort," Mick said. "And, yet, we don't really think of it as extraordinary. That is just what we do. We take care of our customers."

In 2021, MRC Global will celebrate 100 years of looking after its customers. While the company traces its roots back to the 1921 founding of McJunkin Supply Company in the hills of West Virginia, the global valve leader we know today was formed by a century of moments shaped by the people who made up multiple heritage companies and built a single, unified future. One of the most notable in the valve world was Transmark Fcx.

### A legacy of valve solutions

In the summer of 2002, Neil Wagstaff, the CEO of UK-based Transmark Heaton, met his friend, John Bowhay, for lunch. Mr. Wagstaff and Mr. Bowhay worked for competing valve companies and had spent the last six months bidding against each other to win the supply contract for Valero's UK refinery. Earlier that same day, John had learned that his company had decided to abandon their bid at the last hurdle.

Heaton would win the contract, but Mr. Wagstaff wasn't done bidding yet. As he listened to his friend's frustrations, he jumped on the opportunity and offered him a job.

"Heaton was exactly the kind of company I wanted to work for," Mr. Bowhay, MRC Global Senior Vice President – International Operations & Valves, Automation, Measurement & Instrumentation (VAMI), said. "They specialized in the oil and gas and chemical sectors and focused entirely on high-end products and technical solutions."

Mr. Bowhay would spend the next decade of his career selling valves in the UK on behalf of Transmark Heaton as Regional Manager, Sales Director and finally Managing Director. A passion for solution-selling through technical, value-added products and services was not unique to the UK business. The mindset permeated the future Transmark businesses operating in the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Finland, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. While the valve salesmen at Transmark worked their way through Europe and Asia, MRC Global's North American heritage companies were about to change everything. The energy industry was changing. Large, integrated oil companies wanted to consolidate their spend with a single, trusted provider across all three streams. And Red Man and McJunkin were not the only ones who noticed. Private equity giant Goldman Sachs also recognized the trend and the opportunity. While McJunkin and Red Man each sought to fill that void for customers on their own, Goldman saw a unified path forward. On December 7, 2006, McJunkin announced that Goldman Sachs Capital Partners had made



The MRC Global Valve Engineering Center team in Rotterdam work to deliver urgent valve packages to a customer.

## COVER STORY

a “substantial” investment in the company. If that announcement sent waves through the industry, the July 2007 “Merger of Equals” between McJunkin and Red Man was a tsunami. “You can’t talk about our company without the merger between Red Man and McJunkin,” Robert Stein, former MRC Global Senior Vice President – Business Development, said in 2019. “The blending of those two was a really good combination of businesses that didn’t overlap too much. We operated differently, but those are the inevitable hard parts of a merger.” In the end, McJunkin Red Man became the undisputed North American PVF powerhouse. But the company’s new CEO, Andrew Lane, put a long-term strategy in place that was focused on retaining large, global contract customers and growing with them internationally and increasing valve and valve automation capabilities.

A period of rapid-fire growth began with a bang – the addition of Transmark FCX. Practically overnight, on May 30, 2012, McJunkin Red Man was officially the Global Supplier of Choice.

“Solution-selling and service are at the core of the Transmark business and culture,” Mr. Bowhay, who was formerly the Transmark FCX UK Sales Director, said. “For every turn-around and emergency, we were there. Need a valve by midnight on a Sunday? We were there. We never let our customers down. Have a valve problem? We can help to find the best solution.”

That customer-centred culture was exactly what McJunkin Red Man was looking for in their first international acquisition. “We were very good at providing value to our customers,” Mr. Bowhay said of the Transmark culture. “In those days, gaining access to the



plant was much simpler and our salespeople were always in the process solving problems for them. It was great.”

“Our fundamental approach has always been, and will remain, to focus on the service we

provide,” Neil Wagstaff, Transmark FCX’s CEO, told Valve World magazine after the acquisition was announced. “Whilst easy to say, that requires a deep commitment to recruiting, training and retaining the best people in the industry.”

In the coming decade, companies from Australia to Singapore and Norway consistently added stainless steel, high alloy, valve, valve automation and speciality value-driven offerings for customers. The specialized capabilities of MRC Global’s growing international operations, when added to the strong, long-term relationships in North America, ultimately resulted in global valve contracts with Shell (2012), and later Chevron (2017) and Exxon-Mobil (2017). MRC Global retains all three contracts today.

“MRC Global’s lasting success is built on our people, ethics and dedication to our customers,” Rance Long, MRC Global’s Senior Vice President – Business Development, said. “We are proactive. We learn and evolve so that we can take really good care of our customers. That’s what really sets us apart, and our valve and automation capabilities are a big part of what will continue our legacy.”



MRC Global’s Seaham, UK Valve Engineering Center.



MRC Global's Rotterdam, the Netherlands, Valve & Engineering Center.



The MRC Global Singapore team after completing testing on five 36" 300# valves.

## MRC Global in 2021

Since the formation of the global PVF leader, MRC Global has become the largest provider of valves in the world. The company offers complete valve and automation solutions and connects world-class suppliers with the leading producers in today's energy and industrial sectors. But leadership comes with responsibility, and the MRC Global valve team takes that responsibility seriously.

"We are leading the industry in more than just sales volume," Mr. Bowhay says. "Our customers know they can depend on us to provide new options and new technologies. No one else in the world can offer such a complete valve, automation and technical product portfolio and that applies to the up, mid and downstream sectors."

"For example, many of our customers trust us to help them keep their valve specifications up-to-date with the latest industry standards for valve and automation components," Charles Metrailler, MRC Global Executive Director Downstream Valves & Automation, said. "With our help, many customers can simplify their process for choosing the correct valve types, which also improves reliability and ultimately meets their cost reduction goals."

The company's extensive manufacturer qualification program is central to its success and is widely recognized as the premier process in the industry. Earning a place on the company's Approved Manufacturer List involves regular in-depth audits and onsite inspections of not only the manufacturing facility but the foundry and material source facilities by highly experienced quality experts.

"We are not a supply house," Greg Peterson, MRC Global Vice President - VAMI North

America, said. "We act as a technical resource for our customers. We can help them identify the best product for their application and challenges, then communicate with the manufacturer to help all parties work together toward a common goal. We can do that because of the highly experienced people we have throughout our company on the local, regional and corporate level."

## Leading the way

"Critical valves of any nature, in any facility must be maintained during periodic turnarounds," Lance Lorange, MRC Global Executive Director - SCM Valves & Automation, said. "That means working a large population of valves as part of required maintenance. With ValveWatch®, you can identify in advance exactly when monitored valves require attention, which can generate huge cost savings for the operator." ValveWatch®, an MRC Global proprietary online monitoring platform for critical automated valves, automatically captures the information needed to properly assess valve and actuator condition during every valve operation. The technology behind ValveWatch® emerged from a collaboration with key offshore operating companies in Norway. Most recently, the team in Norway provided ValveWatch services, instrumentation, valves, piping and hydraulic, pneumatic and electro systems to the mammoth Johan Castberg and Johan Sverdrup projects in the North Sea.

"MRC Global's product offering in Norway is very well established. Over time we have demonstrated that we add value across a broad spectrum of products, and therefore our clients continue to rely on our service when executing huge capital

projects. We supply carbon and stainless PFF right through to highly technical valve automation packages and online monitoring systems for critical valves. We are proud of delivery performance and technical support provided to both the Johan Castberg and Johan Sverdrup projects on the Norwegian Continental Shelf."

Another example of value-adding innovation is the new ValidTorque certification process, which was developed by and is offered exclusively by MRC Global. ValidTorque provides a precise set of measurements that confirms the performance and applied safety factors of critical actuated valves. This allows operators to understand how changes in cycle times impact future performance and effectively plan preventative maintenance.

The result is:

- Lower overall cost associated with valve maintenance and testing
- Higher proof test coverage
- Lower probability of failure on demand and
- Higher confidence in safety system performance associated with automated valves

"Economic downturns drive innovation, and that is true at MRC Global," said Andrew Lane, MRC Global's President & CEO. "In the last year, we have expanded our e-commerce solution, MRCCO™, and we will continue to focus on providing even more value for our customers through valve-centric services in the future."

To learn more about the company's corporate history or read about moments that mattered to individuals who have been part of building the unified, global valve leader, visit [www.mrcglobal.com/100years](http://www.mrcglobal.com/100years).