

Strategic decision-making, a skilled workforce, a lean business structure, and fiercely loyal to both supplier and client. These business traits have helped Process Control Equipment (PCE) grow from a small UK business to an international group. PCE are eager to maintain their strong reputation while continuing to gain market share in key geographic locations by offering a full range of flow control equipment and services to multiple sectors.

By Daniel Sweet



The team behind PCE works tirelessly to maintain their internationally renowned reputation as a stockist and distributor to the petrochemical, oil and gas, power, pharmaceutical, food and beverage industries.

PCE: celebrating 40 years

Process Control Equipment (PCE) provides valves, instrumentation, and automation packages, along with a complete range of associated services, to clients across the UK and Europe. Their strategically located offices are fully equipped with the resources and the experienced personnel required for prompt and accurate customer assistance, from initial supply through to maintenance, repair, & operation.

PCE's diverse range of customers—from oil & gas companies as well as water treatment, energy, pharma, mineral mining and general processing firms—are all well served by the Group's speed, accuracy and reliability, proven over 40 years of operation. And while competitor companies might carry some of the same brands as PCE, none can

match the Group's uncompromising approach to quality and can-do work mentality, the company states. Managing Director of PCE, Richard Jackson, explains all this and more, taking up the story with PCE's flexible company structure:

"Our customers benefit from a lean organizational framework. We do not drag our feet on decision-making, and though we are spread across multiple countries with multiple service centers, we are not operating within the restrictions of a large corporate hierarchy. On the contrary we are able to move quickly, responding to the market within very short time frames.

Going back to the early days of the company, it becomes clear that this ability has served us well and has allowed us to become the company we are today."

European Valve Stockist Celebrates 40 years

market, and he saw that as a result of this change, there would be an accompanying opportunity to expand outside of England.”

Expansion across Europe

Explaining further, Richard noted that the shift in contract practice opened opportunities to target other industrial clusters beyond the northeast of England, and using the company's market-aware strategy, PCE was able to find new areas for geographical expansion. The first expansion into Scotland, which tapped into the petrochemical cluster located in the center of the country, demonstrated the viability of their approach. Over the course of the next 20 years, PCE began opening full-service locations across Europe. These sites, all situated near industrial centers, include PCE Iberica, near the Tarragona refining and petrochemical industry; PCE Benelux, which services the Dutch & Belgian area; a new location in North West England, targeting power generation and nuclear companies (HT-PCE) in the region; and PCE London, located near Heathrow.

As these sites grew and became integrated into the PCE operation, they nonetheless remained capable of independent service, and each is a standalone center, with its own great range of stock, rapid delivery capabilities, in-house equipment, expertise for sales, testing, and project management.

Valve & automation packages

As PCE expanded across Europe, so too did its product range. According to Nigel Hoult, Group Sales Director, “as time went



Managing Director Richard Jackson.

on, valve and automation sales surpassed our sales of instrumentation. As with our geographical expansion, it was early on that valve automation was identified as an emerging and important sector. We saw this trend coming all the way back in 1984, in fact, and we realized there was going to be a real need for dedicated automation packages. We have never lost our in-depth knowledge for instrumentation though, and by adding expertise in valve and automation to our portfolio, we are able to provide an exceptional level of service to the customers.”

Mr. Hoult states that “By choosing PCE, the customer comes away with a comprehensive solution that is backed up by rigorous testing, traceability and documentation. This enables us not only to supply a great quality valve, but we can also include the other components and instrumentation needed to produce high-quality automation packages.”



Great insight

With Richard's last quote in mind, PCE's heritage goes back to 1980, exactly 40 years ago. Barry and Patricia Jackson, Richard's parents, founded the company and in the beginning, the company focused exclusively on the supply of instrumentation to end users across the North East of England. As a small, family-run business PCE concentrated on product quality and on developing their instrumentation expertise. “But not long after the company was founded,” Richard explained, “it became obvious to my father that the landscape of the market was changing. Companies that were operating through local contracts with large oil & gas end users began signing larger, national deals. It also became apparent that if PCE did not follow suit, we would be left behind. So, we began focusing on securing national contracts, allowing us to grow in size, scope, and trajectory. We were able to succeed in this change thanks to our ‘family-business’ structure and our ability to strategize quickly. My father really had great insight into the



PCE maintains a fleet of trucks at all locations to ensure speedy and reliable delivery.

Stand for your brands

PCE pride themselves on their “fierce loyalty” to both the customer and supplier, and one of their defining strengths is their reputation for defending and supporting the integrity of their suppliers’ brands. In fact, Richard said that “for us, the supplier is as valued as the customer, and when a supplier meets PCE’s exacting standards, they can count on a dedicated ally in the market.”

An excellent example of this comes from PCE’s relationship with Neway, a quality valve manufacturer that produces equipment for the full range of process sectors. According to Richard, PCE “helped introduce Neway to the European market,” and the company recently presented Richard with an award in recognition of the 20 years of partnership between the two businesses.

“As we have grown, major brands have come to see that PCE can act as a vehicle into the market. When they partner with us, we support their efforts to become a widely used, and more importantly, trusted name in flow control. In this way, when we partner with a supplier, we do not just become a postbox through which their products are passed into the market. Instead, we are driven by quality and by the customer, we back our suppliers by stocking to a high degree so we help push the brands we work with to be the best they can be.”

Quality first

Richard explains that quality control is a main driver of this unique approach to push brands to the next level. “Our Group Operations Director, Les Taylor, conducts regular supplier audits, ensuring that products are of the highest quality before going to the customer.” This is the case for new suppliers, as well as suppliers that have been working with PCE for many years.

According to Richard, these suppliers do not mind these quality inspections. “On the contrary, they appreciate our frequent rigorous check-ins for quality assurance. By ensuring that no faulty or defective equipment is sent to a customer, it not only maintains our own reputation, but it helps to defend the supplier’s brand as well.” Testing and quality assurance are two general principles for PCE, which prides itself on its documentation department and its state-of-the-art testing equipment—available at all PCE locations. Les Taylor adds: “We actively encourage our customers to visit PCE to perform face



The depth of PCE’s inventory has sustained them through the coronavirus pandemic, allowing them, as always, to fulfill customer orders on time.

to face audits, both to demonstrate the strength of our quality systems and to show them the lengths that we go to in order to protect their assets and reputations from supply chain risks.”

As a result of their rigorous quality control, PCE supplies other major brands across Europe, such as Hoke, Neles, Jamesbury, Ladish, Valvosider and Bonney Forge. On July 1, the company entered into a contract with Oliver Valves, becoming the primary distributor of their products in the UK.

End user changes

As PCE has changed over the years, so too have the requirements and demands of their end users. Particularly in recent

years, fugitive emissions has become a key criteria for PCE’s customers, across all sectors.

“Depending on government requirements and other factors, PCE helps guide our customers in choosing the correct product for their process. We try to bridge the gap between the end user’s needs and the knowledge and experience needed to make the right choice in design.”

Richard continues: “PCE has developed its technical knowledge on fugitive emissions through an open dialogue with customers and suppliers. We communicate openly and honestly to determine the capabilities of our suppliers and how their products can address changing emissions criteria.”

Project management

Mr. Hoult pointed out that one key area for growth at each PCE branch is project management. In addition to testing and maintenance expertise, each PCE site is staffed with a team of project managers who can work with clients during the early phases of a new project, supplying valves, instrumentation and automation products as needed.

“Thanks to our vast stock, we can service complex demands promptly and efficiently, supported by close partnerships that we have developed with our key suppliers. Further, our in-house automation centers give us the capability and flexibility to meet demanding timetables, whilst maintaining control over quality”.

“With regard to documentation, our technical expertise ensures that all project documentation requirements (including 3.1b certificates, GA drawings, welding and painting procedures, production schedules, certification and manuals) are handled with precision and care. Dedicated document controllers deliver full project or customer-specific documentation dossiers and deliver the same quality and precision whether the project at hand is a large-scale, multimillion Euro project, or a smaller venture. Overall, PCE can lend our expertise at all stages of a project’s lifecycle, bringing the same guarantee in quality that our regular clients have come to expect.”



Along with quality audits, PCE performs extensive testing on the products they carry, and each PCE location is equipped with the full range of testing equipment.

Proactive in crises

With the coronavirus impacting many businesses in the flow control community, PCE has found that their can-do work mentality and their extensive range of products in-stock has carried them through the past months with relative ease.

“Of course,” said Richard, “we have taken the usual precautions for both our employees and visitors to our offices. We have people working from home where possible, and we have thermal imaging machines at the reception to check employees’ temperatures. We have plexiglass screens and hand sanitizers in the building, and we monitor the situation day by day again demonstrating our high quality standards even in these challenging times. But really, our team has worked as hard as they always do through the past months, and in some ways the situation has really brought out the best in the company. I see our can-do attitude in practice, with employees seeing the work through to the end, despite the disruption.”

Richard also mentions the depth of PCE’s inventory as a real positive, as this enabled continual sales and supply of products via its well-stocked warehouses. “I see multiple opportunities in the near

future, particularly for a business with our levels of stock. So far, PCE has survived through oil crises, two world recessions, and general periods of downturn. By our nature we stay proactive during these times, and we never adopt a defeatist attitude. There is always more work to be done, no matter the situation at hand. Unlike others, we raise our stock levels during periods of uncertainty.”

Outlook

Moving forward, PCE will continue to maintain the highest quality standards, while growing their individual locations to

capture further market share. As Richard points out, “each of our locations has the potential to expand. For example, in July PCE Benelux has moved into a purpose-built facility which is four times larger than its former location, underlining the great potential in the Benelux region. We are actively seeking other locations throughout Europe to deliver our growth strategy.” With an eye on the anniversary the Group celebrates this year, Richard concludes with: “No matter where our next expansion occurs, we will continue to provide the same high level of service to our customers over the coming 40 years.”

Facts & Figures – Process Control Equipment (PCE)

Managing Director:	Richard Jackson
Established:	1980
Employees:	102
Headquarters:	Stockton on Tees, England
Brands carried:	18
Products:	Gate, globe, check ball & butterfly valves, actuated packages & instrumentation
Industries:	Oil and gas, chemical and petrochemical, power generation, pulp & paper, water and pharmaceutical.
Website:	https://www.processcontrolequipment.co.uk/