

The Wm Powell Company (Powell Valves) has stood at the forefront of innovation since its foundation in 1846. As a leader in pioneering technology in the industrial valve market, Powell has provided valves to NASA, could boast being Thomas Edison's valve of choice and is a leader in quality. The company has a rich history of achievements that has resulted in their continued success over the past 174 years.



Powell Valves: first in innovating for the future

By Sarah Bradley

Valve World spoke to Executive Vice President David B. “Brandy” Cowart from Powell’s headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio, to learn about the company’s evolution and growth, their investment in the company and how the company will overcome the current and future hurdles in the industry. Powell Valves has endured a Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Korean & Vietnam Wars, Desert Storm and the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks. Powell rebuilt after floods, survived the U.S. economic disaster in the Great Depression and helped put men on the moon, proving the company’s ability to evolve to customer needs in the ever-changing world market. Powell is weathering the current business climate well and continues to follow the coronavirus pandemic very closely as it relates to their employees, manufacturing facilities, logistics, suppliers and valued customers.

Work ethic, culture and compassion

“Powell’s customers have been and will continue to benefit from the large finished valve inventories the company maintains in our hubs in

the U.S.A. and China, along with our stable manufacturing flow. Powell has not experienced any interruptions to our materials availability or manufacturing capacity. We are continuing to maintain full functionality of all operations while utilizing remote employees where applicable,” said Brandy Cowart. “The work ethic, culture and compassion that embodies the employees of The Wm. Powell Company is what will allow us to continue to succeed and to once again proudly contribute to another victory.”

Powell has maintained its longevity and stability in the valve industry by providing the highest quality products with cutting-edge design features, at competitive prices with excellent service, on-time deliveries and flexibility. Quality engineered products is a foundation. As Randy Cowart – Chairman, CEO & President explains “No Quality = No Sales. No Sales = No Jobs”. As a privately-held, family-owned corporation, Powell can continue to build on their legacy of quality, innovation and family-style company culture.

“We have integrity in everything we do. We may be a smaller company, but we have big-company

customer's needs swiftly. The company leadership executes plans and strategic objectives to service the customer and grow their market share.

Digital frontrunner

Powell has been employing their strong company culture and employee commitment through their recent investments in further defining their project management groups and ensuring greater involvement from the staff at all levels. The company has put several 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 accurate real-time information that assists with keeping capital projects on time and budget.

The company recognizes that the fast digital availability of product information is essential to their customers and to keep at the forefront of digitalization. With their customers' needs in mind, Powell has made several updates to their website to ensure a superior visitor experience both from desktop and mobile devices. As such, Powell Valves' website won a Gold Award in the Manufacturing Website Category in the 2019 AVA Digital Awards and is continuously upgrading their site with additional enhancements.

First in fugitive emissions

As a pioneer in the industry, the Wm Powell Company has always focused heavily on innovation and being a company of



resources, opportunities, possibilities, and capabilities. It allows us to be nimble and be proactive versus reactive. If you are too entrenched in, then you are forced to be reactive. By being flexible, nimble, and quick, we can get ahead in meeting our customers' needs which is our core focus," Brandy explained.

The flexibility and speed to move with their customer and industry needs are attributes which have served them well in the past, the present, and will continue in the future.

We are family, the Powell company culture

Customer First, Positive Energy, Teamwork, Performance, Quality, Adaptability & Flexibility and Integrity are the cornerstones of the company culture. As a family-owned business, Powell greatly values their employees, and through them, they can extend the family environment to their customers and their supply chain.

"The family environment has been instilled in the company and our employees for a very long time – my father, Randy Cowart, is only the ninth Chairman, CEO & President of the company. Having nine presidents in 174 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.

Every Powell employee, from the front door to the shipping dock, is an entrepreneur and 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 allow the company to react to



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“firsts”. Powell’s rich history brings unparalleled knowledge and experience.

“Powell was one of the first innovators to really be committed to the control of fugitive emissions, both financially and by actually getting the products through individual product testing. There are a lot of companies in the industry that will follow the trends. Still, we committed to perfecting fugitive emissions technology very early on with our partnership with the A.W. Chesterton Company regarding packing. In this way, we made sure that we were providing our customers with the best options before they knew it was necessary,” said Brandy.

Despite the issues many have encountered with the economic downturns, Powell’s diversity has allowed them to grow continually. 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.

Foundation for our success

“Having a diverse customer base has been one of the biggest success points for the company. Through the years, there have been some tough economic cycles in one industry or another – be it oil & gas, electric power generation, chemical,

paper or industrial gas. 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. Our product diversity, engineering capabilities and diversity in our customer base is a big foundation for our success as compared to our competitors who may focus on one industry; they live and die by the success of that industry.”

Wider product scope under one roof

Powell’s long-term strategy is to continue to expand on products that assist their channel partners in completing the package not only for their day-to-day MRO customers but for the large capital projects. “In recent years we added new product categories – floating ball valves, resilient seated butterfly valves and high-performance double offset butterfly valves. We have added these product categories in response to 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 new product categories are in very mature and competitive marketplaces, and our brand, expertise and engineering behind those products have been well-received in the marketplace.”

Recognizing the changing demands of the industry, Powell Valves has always made strides to identify the upcoming voids in the industry and develop ways to proactively fulfil the requirements before their customers even realize the need is there.

Cryogenic clean rooms

“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 can maximize material cost, machining efficiencies and tolerances,” Brandy revealed. “Another factor in our 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.”

Powell has a corporate engineering team in Cincinnati along with engineering teams in their manufacturing plants. The company states that its valve engineering has



always been leading in the industry with a heritage of writing the foundation of many of the specifications in use today. Powell also continues to invest in machinery, training, inventory and infrastructure at all of their locations. Acknowledging the growth in the industrial gas and LNG markets, Powell has made significant investments in state-of-the-art cryogenic clean room and testing facilities. They now have four global cryogenic clean rooms.



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 strategy, a good channel infrastructure and customer focus. Powell's Distributor Channel partners are the Best of the Best with some relationships over 100 years old.

Houston, hotbed of the valve industry

Maintaining a global presence has allowed Powell to remain competitive and successful in an industry that is fast-paced with urgent needs to be met worldwide. By investing in extending its global reach with the establishment of manufacturing and distribution centres in China to supply sales throughout Asia and the Middle East, Powell recognizes the importance of a worldwide infrastructure in support of their business. By establishing a distribution facility in Houston, Texas in 2014, Powell positioned itself in the centre of the valve industry 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 the hotbed of the valve industry. 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. 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.

New HQ in Cincinnati

Powell has begun construction of a new Corporate Headquarters and distribution centre in Cincinnati, Ohio with an estimated move-in date in Spring 2021. The new facility will be 46,000 square feet and house the company's executive team, engineering, sales (domestic & international), supply chain management, logistics, accounting and finance. Approximately 30,000 square feet of the facility will serve as an inventory hub to provide additional service and availability to our Mid-West distributor partners.

"Powell has a long heritage in the Cincinnati area. We are proud of that heritage and happy to be making the expansion and investment in our community. The new facility will provide a great environment for our employees and great service to our customers," said Randy Cowart, Chairman, CEO & President. Brandy concluded: "Just saying the customer comes first may sound cliché, but that is the focus of everything we do. 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 favourite place to call, and we want them to call us first."