

Pentair Valves & Controls forge ahead



Mr. Chris Stevens, President Pentair Valves & Controls Business Unit.

By way of example Mr. Stevens refers to Anderson Greenwood and Crosby pressure relief valves and Sempell control valves operating in supercritical steam power plants, which have pushed the envelope of operating temperatures and pressures to drive up efficiency. Also, he tells us that back in the 1950s they helped create the space in Keystone's resilient seated butterfly valves. The product has now been re-engineered resulting in a valve with increased life cycle. "Independent testing on the new valve shows that it lasts 2 1/2 times longer than those of Pentair's competitors," says Mr. Stevens

September 2012 saw the merger of Pentair and Tyco International's Flow Control business. Since then, how has Pentair Valves & Controls been faring? Valve World spoke to Chris Stevens, President Pentair Valves & Controls Business Unit, to learn more about where they are currently and what their plans are for the future.

By Christian Borrmann and Gillian Gane

"Pentair is a very customer oriented company, across all our Global Business Units," begins Mr. Stevens. "Our leadership discussions focus on how we can better serve our customers and the Pentair/Tyco merger has resulted in improvements and benefits to them. I hope our customers would say they

didn't experience any challenges through the merger, but that they have seen improvements. We put a lot of effort into making the merger as seamless as possible and Pentair's Integrated Management System is about driving operational discipline and delivering benefits. We have already seen improvements in on-time delivery and lead time.

Key trends

Mr. Stevens explains: "A few key trends are driving our actions. Firstly, population growth which brings with it a growing need for energy, food and clean water, especially in developing regions, and these in turn lead to an increase in the demand for global infrastructure where Pentair can play a vital part. We feel that we have a responsibility and are privileged, as a global industrial leader, to be able to deliver sustainable solutions to help meet the growing needs of the world population and improve quality of life." In addition to the manufacture of high quality products essential in the provision of clean water, energy and affordable food, The Pentair Foundation provides funding and expertise. Since 1998 the

Foundation has donated over \$50 million to philanthropic causes, including providing clean, safe drinking water for over 500,000 people worldwide. "Secondly, our products are more frequently being used in areas with challenging weather conditions, harsh environments or tough operating conditions such as oil sands, offshore and subsea, oil and gas fields, remote mining locations and supercritical power stations," continues Mr. Stevens. "Operators are looking to further increase their efficiency which, in turn, drives the need for better severe service products." "Thirdly is the ongoing drive to reduce emissions and to increase reliability, efficiency and safety. It is our job to help our customers provide safe and efficient infrastructure."



proudly, adding “however, while we are one of the largest players, it’s not just about size but about valve quality and the expertise of our people on our products, applications and problem solving. This, together with a global and local presence, enables Pentair to give an ongoing service and support to customers.”

Solutions for customers

Mr. Stevens believes that the big challenge is how Pentair can help customers improve their process performance while keeping the environment, their people and their assets safe and sustainable. He explains: “In our business we sell a lot of standard products but we also do an awful lot of custom engineering, specific application engineering and application solution work. We work with customers to help them with the next level of product support. We look at various applications and explore solution options. This is how a lot of development is done. Take automotive companies, for instance; a lot of companies use Formula 1 as a test bed for technology which then finds its way into production cars. A lot of our custom engineering and the advanced solutions are then put into our standard products so all our customers end up gaining.” To demonstrate this Mr. Stevens tells us about work being done with a customer in oil sands. “In some of their tailings applications, they were finding that their valves were wearing out in weeks and months. We worked closely with the customer to solve the environmental problems they were experiencing and redesigned one of our valves specifically



for that application. We have now had valves installed there for 2 years—already 17 times longer than what they were getting from the old products.”

Global projects

Global expansion of projects is also something the industry is seeing more of these days, for example end users in one part of the world using engineering firms in another and perhaps construction work being done in yet another country. Mr. Stevens says this is where a global company such as Pentair Valves & Controls can really demonstrate their added value. “We worked on one of the big alumina projects going up in the Middle East. Some of the initial specification work was done in Australia, the engineering and procurement in Asia, installation, and commissioning and service work in the Middle East. Processes and tools we have put in place, such as our



Customer Relationship Management tool (CRM), enabled us to manage those hand offs globally and seamlessly and provide a service to the customer that perhaps some other players can’t provide,” he explains. “The number of sales offices plus the number of commercial people that we have who deal with customers every day in offices all around the world – about 2000 people in sales and service functions – is a huge advantage for us.” Mr. Stevens believes that this is part of the reason that customers keep coming back and new customers are attracted but that Pentair’s products, reputation and brand history are equally important. Brands such as Anderson Greenwood, Biffi, Clarkson, Crosby, Keystone, Sempell, the triple offset Vanessa valve, Westlock and Yarway. “Almost A to Z. If I could find a good ‘Z’ brand, then we really would have A to Z covered,” he laughs.

Products and service are something Mr. Stevens is really passionate about. “We have really great products. We routinely do ‘voice of the customer’ work when we ask for feedback on what is their key buying criteria, in order of importance. We then ask how our products compare to their needs and to our competitors’ products. We do this all over the world and the results show that typically, a high percentage of our products outperform on both counts. They last longer, perform better and seal better so, great products. Solving application issues and seeing technology advancing makes the valve industry a fun and dynamic place to work.” “Service is also a differentiator and, as more companies move away from having their own internal valve maintenance and valve groups, they are looking more and more to us for help to keep them running safely, reliably and at optimal levels. Our strategy going forward includes looking at ways in which we can continue to serve our customers in the best way possible. We need to be there for them, around the globe, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year with the right staff and the right products so customers can sleep well at night knowing that, if a problem occurs, we will be there to help them fix it.”

What the future holds

Says Mr. Stevens, “We are working on a couple of things and I have been very pleased with the direction we have taken. In the last 4 or 5 years we have made a number of investments in product management and engineering to revitalise our portfolio and hopefully



your readers are starting to see that with some of our new products. What you will continue to see from Pentair Valves & Controls are products that enable processes to become more efficient in harsher environments.” “Over the next five years I don’t believe you will see Pentair Valves & Controls focus change from being a world class valve, actuator, and controls manufacturing company. However, what our customers experience will be vastly different. We are working hard to maintain and extend our product leadership and to be an easier company to work with. Collaboration between our Global Business Units will play a part resulting in leveraging our global footprint and assets and allowing better coordination for serving customers in emerging markets. Ordering will be simplified as will collaboration on product development, and we will continue to improve our service levels so it will be a pleasure for customers to

interact with us. We will also continue to push the envelope to help bring about a suitable infrastructure to meet the world’s growing demand for water, energy and food.” As for the future of the valve industry as a whole, Mr. Stevens believes there will continue to be some very large global players but there will still be room for reasonably sized regional and smaller players. “The trends for demand correlate closely with the GDP. By serving industries all over the world means that we are somewhat insulated from specific country or single industry ups and downs.”

And finally...

Mr. Stevens is passionate and enthusiastic about the valve industry: “When I joined Pentair 9 years ago I really didn’t know the valve industry. When I travelled around it struck me as odd that people were so enthusiastic about valves – now I am one of those people and I feel privileged and honoured to work for a leader in the business. Pentair Valves & Controls has great people and great operations, products and history. I love interacting with customers. We don’t profess to be perfect all of the time but we really work hard to serve their needs and help them be successful and that is what keeps me excited and engaged. I think it’s a fantastic industry and I love being a part of it and I try to instil this into others. We help keep the lights on, keep water flowing and help to protect people at work so they can return safely to their families.” He smiles as he adds, “We even help brew beer and wine. In short – we do really good stuff!”

