

KITZ Corporation Quality & Consistency Across

Japan's largest valve manufacturer, KITZ Corporation is solidifying its position as one of the leading manufacturers of valves in the world. Established in 1951, KITZ Corporation has successfully become a trusted supplier of products ranging from the home to industrial processes, manufacturing valves and other fluid control devices. With over 40,000 types of valves and sizes in production for a broad range of applications, KITZ prides itself on the consistent quality and outstanding reliability that customers have come to appreciate and expect from the KITZ brand. To meet the needs of their customers in the western hemisphere, its Stafford, Texas-based business, KITZ Corporation America (KCA) was established in 1984.

Valve World Americas journal had the opportunity to speak with KITZ Corporation of America President Jim Walther, Vice President-Sales Darrell Lueckemeyer and Senior Advisor Tom Hannafin regarding KITZ's position as a global manufacturer, the high quality product standards the company upholds and the future endeavors of KITZ America.

By Sarah Bradley

"One of the reasons the U.S. company was established is KITZ had gained considerable market share. We were dealing with a lot of multinational companies like Exxon, Shell and Mobil at the time. KITZ Japan felt since most of their North American clients were headquartered here, it was important for KITZ to establish a direct sales and technical presence, where we could be in touch with them on an as-needed basis, as well as build a broad based distribution network in the United States," explained Jim Walther.

The KITZ Group has established an expansive network of branch offices all over the world from its Japanese headquarters to its U.S. Corporation and subsidiaries in Germany, the U.K., Spain, the U.A.E., Taiwan, India, China and Thailand.

"Truly we are a global company and yet we are still unique in the valve industry because all of our facilities all over the world are KITZ facilities; KITZ owned and operated," said Darrell Lueckemeyer.

"KITZ Corporation America started out in a high-rise building and we have grown to our second stocking location where we have a warehouse full of over 10 million dollars of product. You can't do that without supporting it by sales," said Jim. "We have hit certain benchmarks that have allowed us to expand not only the breadth of the products we sell, but also the amount of inventory that we keep. We are grateful to those users who still require a consistent, good quality product."

With a complete organization of only 34 full-time employees in the United States, KCA has impressed the industry with their ability to continue to achieve growing success with such a small team. The company believes product quality combined with ensuring prompt service and dedicated customer support has been a major factor to KITZ's success.

"I think it's about people. We have really skilled people in good positions. We are purposely lean, but I really believe it's the way our people treat people that makes the difference," explained Tom Hannafin. "This is a people business and whether it's the president of our company or the guys in charge of sales or our regional managers, they know the faces and names of our end users. We work very hard to support our distribution network because it is our mission to represent KITZ Corporation for sales, marketing, service support and technical support in the Americas."

Aside from their reputation for superior performance and consistency of all of their products, KITZ attributes much of its success in the Americas to the company's commitment to establishing a strong and successful distribution network in order to provide quality customer service to their clients. The company stresses the importance of aligning themselves with quality distribution support.

"We would not be successful if we didn't have the distributor network we have. We are fortunate to have what we think



to be the premier distributor network in North America and globally," said Jim. "That is companies like MRC, Wilson, AIV, Sunbelt, and MA Stewart. We could not have enjoyed the success we have today without our terrific distributors and of course the support of our headquarters and manufacturing facilities."

Refusing to compromise on quality

Becoming the first Japanese valve company to earn ISO 9001 certification for its quality management system, the company's quality assurance system ensures their materials, products and services meet or exceed customer requirements, at all operating stages.

"The bottom line to the success of KITZ, globally as an organization, has been primarily the consistency of the product. We have been successful with the end users because they know with KITZ, they are receiving consistent product. The quality is consistent and that is key," said Darrell.

"We are on a mission to produce quality products. We can document our quality process and we have never reduced the quality process to accommodate the competitive nature of the marketplace," added Jim. "We are continually trying to find ways to maintain our standard of quality and still have a product that can compete on a relative basis in the market."

KITZ insists on rigorous testing procedures to ensure the uniform quality of their products across the board. Their testing and analysis procedures allow the company to study the materials under the same conditions a customer may require and ensure all valves meet or exceed the requirements set by the world's recognized industrial standards such as ISO, ASME, ANSI, API, MSS, BS, DIN and JIS.

"There are national standards everyone has to meet; rules for design and beyond that, there are individual performance standards customers may have as requirements. Additionally, the federal government under the auspices of the EPA is monitoring emissions. KITZ has continued to lower our emission performance of our valves since we first marketed them to the point that today, we are way below what the EPA maximums are. We began testing in-house and in research labs in 1992, well before the Clean Air Act," explained Tom.

"At KITZ, we test 100% of our valves; no matter what size or what pressure class, our internal standard for seat closure is zero leakage, which is beyond API test standards. Our low emission performance standard started out at 500 ppm, and then we brought it down to 100 ppm and now to 50 ppm," said Darrell. "I have a lot of end users reporting when the products perform exceptionally well over a year, you only have to monitor once a year instead of quarterly, and therefore realizing a significant cost savings by not having to do the testing as frequently because they are using KITZ valves."



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Tom added, “Our valves have traceability, they have certified material test reports which confirms we test 100% of our valves – not every 10th valve, not every 2nd valve – we put all valves through the required testing. Each valve has numbers that tie into material test reports available online on our website for our customers, so they can have a complete document package that satisfies process safety management, accessible to them at no charge.”

Product advancements

Creating value is a driving force behind KITZ’s advances in fluid control technologies and systems. The products must be engineered to meet the requirements and demands of a wide array of applications with pressure, temperature and line fluid determining the advances of the product range. With the increased demand of the industry for products suited for severe service applications, KITZ Corporation bridged the gap in their product line with the acquisition of German manufacturer, Perrin GmbH in early 2010. The Perrin

KITZ stands proudly by its research and development strategies of meeting the manifold needs of user industries and continually upgrading the level of their product quality and reliability. Acknowledging the difficulties of maintaining market competitive price points without compromising product quality, KITZ believes customer loyalty and desire for superior performance valves and the importance of investing in quality and safety will remain a key component to the company’s continued thriving success.

“KITZ increased efforts to produce and emphasize high alloy products, which has been a highlight of our growth over the past decade. I think KITZ is the recognized leader in the high alloy business in this marketplace. Users have migrated away from simply 316 stainless steel standards and we now supply a lot of inconel, nickel and hastelloy valves,” said Jim.

“Over the years, process temperatures have gone up which has put the challenge on 316 stainless and moved the industry



product line enabled KITZ to accommodate more high pressure, severe service, high temperature applications in quarter turn products. KITZ’s basic quarter turn product in metal or graphite seated configurations could withstand temperatures of 932 degrees F. The new Perrin offering ranges from cryogenic services to -325 degrees F and can exceed temperatures of 1500 degrees F and up to ASME Class 2500.

“The product can be used in virtually any high pressure, high temperature applications in the hydrocarbon processing industry, as well as clean services in semi-conductors,” said Tom. “Perrin products are very specific and cover a broad range of metallurgy. The users who buy the Perrin product do not usually have a requirement for 20 of them, they need one or three.”

“It’s a high-end specialty engineered product line,” explained Darrell. “When we were first introduced to Perrin two years ago, we didn’t know what type of market potential that area had and we kept throwing requirements at them, ‘Can you do this?’ and they have never said no. The product really speaks for itself.”

towards other materials. It’s simply a matter of determining what works in a process that either eliminates or greatly minimizes the effects of corrosion,” Tom explained.

“We see inquiries for 317 stainless steel for applications in new opportunity oils. These new crudes are pretty heavy with naphthenic acid, among other things and using that alloy is kind of like a ‘poor man’s solution’. Plants can go to an inconel or an incoloy and get a longer life cycle versus the 4 or 5 year life cycle of 317. They are going to buy it for a lot less money but it’s not going to last as long as a higher more noble alloy. Many users are deciding to look at total life cycle cost and spend a little bit more money on a different alloy that will give their valve a much longer lifespan,” added Darrell.

KITZ has also made further developments by upgrading their floating ball valves with new design features. Available in two piece full port and end entry regular port, the new design has been greatly improved to meet customer needs, featuring mounting pads in accordance with ISO/CAPI, 20 ppm low emissions, and incorporates inconel belleville spring washers to live load the packing gland which compensates for thermal differentials. These easily actuated, soft seated valves are available in Class

150/300# and available in multiple alloys such as carbon, stainless, nickel, monel, duplex and other exotic materials.

“KITZ has built a very important technical feature into this valve; cavity pressure relief. When a gas or fluid expands under pressure, if the product is trapped between the seats with no method to relieve the product back to the upstream side, the valve will likely sustain damage. You probably would not be able to move the ball and in a two-piece valve, it would pull apart,” said Tom.

Back to the future

KITZ is always focused on remaining on the forefront of industry innovations, ensuring close communications with their distribution network and listening to their customers’ needs in coming up with the best products to fulfill industry demands. While KITZ Corporation of America continues to maintain its presence in the market, the company is constantly in pursuit of opportunities for growth.

“Though we are not actively looking to put a manufacturing facility in the U.S., the KITZ Group as a total company, is seeking acquisitions and if an acquisition would include a company with a manufacturing facility located here, that could be a possibility,” Jim disclosed. “We are going to be focusing on Latin America, as well. We are involved in several countries there and we have a very experienced regional manager covering that area. We have a very large focus on Brazil and we plan to have an operation in country within the next year or so.”

With the company continuing to expand its reach on all corners of the globe, it is undeniable that KITZ will continue to cement its presence as a leading global manufacturer backed by product integrity, superior service and a drive for excellence.

“We aren’t just going to stand on our laurels and say we have a great product; there are always ways to improve and we will continue to do so,” concluded Darrell.

