

Romatec - Engineered Solutions

A distributor of industrial valves, actuators, pumps and instrumentation products and solutions for the process industry, Romatec has experienced continued growth over the past 57 years in service. A result of their commitment to representing high quality products, providing their customers with technical expertise and service support, Romatec has been successfully providing engineered solutions for liquid and gas process needs since its foundation in Montreal in 1955. Romatec has since established offices and warehouses in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and more recently in California.

Valve World Americas had the opportunity to speak with President, Steve Dockerty and Vice President of Sales & Marketing and General Manager, Paul Darche, to discuss Romatec's continued growth, their new APEK valve line launch and the company's dedication to consistency and service.

By Sarah Bradley

"One of the key elements of our long term success is the consistency in servicing the customer. We are consistently striving to look after our customers' needs by doing business fundamentals right – providing excellence in customer service and exceptional value in both product quality and cost of ownership," said Steve Dockerty. "Listening to the customer is important. If we understand a customer's application needs and problems, then we are able to work towards finding the right solution to help them. There is a baseball analogy of our business philosophy in that we want to make sure that we hit singles and do the fundamentals right. It's great when the homeruns come however we don't want to grow our business on those homeruns but rather on strong fundamentals driven by effectively servicing our customers every day."



Steve Dockerty - President

Being a solutions provider

Paul and Steve believe that one of the most important secrets to Romatec's continuous success has much to do with the quality of service that the company brings to their customers.

"If you make sure that your customer is treated properly and treated well, that's how you build a great relationship. Good customer service, great employees and good products – those three elements converged is what has given Romatec longevity," said Paul Darche. "Having customer intimacy, by understanding their needs is so important. Listening to the client is so critical to becoming a successful solutions provider."

The company also maintains that the relationship with their suppliers is just as important as the ones they build with clients. Romatec works alongside the manufacturers that they represent in order to support and promote growth and act as a bridge between the manufacturers and end users.

"We view our suppliers as upstream customers and channel partners. We still have some suppliers that have been with us since the beginning and to have that kind of longterm support, it comes from building a partnership, having open transparency, working through any hiccups that may come up, and having open dialogue and communication to have that two way street between us," said Paul. "We participate in market intelligence and feed that back to our manufacturers. There's an opportunity for us to transfer market information from the end users back to the manufacturers and in some cases, we are the eyes and the ears of the manufacturers. Our customer base is broad; we have end-users, OEMs, sub-distribution resellers, subcontractors and engineering firms and from that diverse customer base, we get access to many industrial markets. We are



able to get important customer feedback and funnel it back to the manufacturers." Romatec firmly believes in the importance of investing in technology; from ensuring that they are at the forefront of innovation in terms of their internal technology, business processes and systems between branches which increases productivity, to their significant investments towards training their staff to become experts on the technology behind the products they sell. The client relationship is maintained through ensuring that their inside and outside sales representatives have the technical know-how to understand the applications of their products and have the technical knowledge and training to assist their customers in solving any issues that may arise.

The company stresses the importance of ensuring that they hire the best people to represent Romatec, from inside sales to outside sales, administration and employees across the board.

"One of the strengths of the organization is the people we have and the team that has been built over the years. They're the backbone of what we do. The reality is we have excellent product lines and have been committed to implementing business systems and infrastructure to support and grow the business, but the key element is having highly competent and committed people to drive the business and its essential that this is recognized," said Steve. "The fact is we have a great team of talented individuals."

"When you hire people you look for skills, experience and character traits and those are usually the three foundations or pillars. What we have learned over the years is that the character traits are the key," added Paul. "You look for the people with the right character traits that represent the message behind Romatec; the brand and the principles. The technical part and experience are complementary. We can train the technical part if the aptitude is there, but the fundamental character traits, especially the intangibles associated with customer service, are something that are not trainable."

Products for all markets

Besides the strong focus on providing impeccable customer service, cultivating and maintaining client and supplier relationships and their investment in people and progress, Romatec represents a wide array of valve, actuators and valve automation, pumps, instrumentation and

process equipment products and related services. Recognized for being Canada's largest distributor with the greatest inventory of Apollo valve products, Romatec has been associated with the line since the late 1960s and work collaboratively with their sales management team to continue to grow the market for the high quality "pedigree" product line. Their extensive internal expertise and experience with the Apollo products is demonstrated through their successful representation of the line which they consider, from a quality standpoint, to be second-to-none in its product category. Apollo consistently expands their innovative product portfolio, which also allows Romatec to grow with their existing and new customer base.



Paul Darche - Vice President of Sales & Marketing and General Manager

Romatec has also been recognized as an authorized service center for GE's RCS actuator line, placing the company in high regard with clients who rely on the company as an expert resource for technical troubleshooting, as well as offering the physical servicing, parts inventory and actuation.

"The RCS brand is a premium line and it is an important product for us. It carries significant market presence and by extension of that, to be the authorized service center aligns us with a premiere manufacturer. It gives us credibility and access to a number of markets, with a first-class line that is respected in those markets and industries," said Paul.

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"It also holds us to an elevated standard in terms of competency," added Steve. "The in-depth training has to be monitored by GE with criteria that we have to adhere to. There is significant investment in inventory and in developing the needed skillsets to be an authorized service center and its something we are quite proud of. Our service technicians and inside technical sales staff provide best-in-class service to the market and it has been a fundamental ingredient to our success as a service center. I'm going to suggest that we have inside sales representatives that would be considered in the top percentile of experts with this product line in North America."

The latest addition to the Romatec portfolio was brought in to meet a niche market that the company previously felt they were unable to serve effectively for their customers. The Apek valve line, a quality commodity ball valve line, was released to fill the market need in the economy segment. The Apek valve fills the void in the market for a consistent, high quality, economy commodity ball valve and is enabling Romatec to service all levels of customer need. Romatec is proud to have been named as the exclusive representative for Apek for North America.

"We went to Asia and partnered up directly with the manufacturer. We audited the manufacturing - the foundries, the manufacturing facility, the testing procedures, so we have 100% confidence we are bringing to market, a product that has consistency and high quality," explained Steve. "We feel that we have a loyal distribution network that will benefit from the introduction of the Apek line and this was key as its essential we bring value to our customers. It's a significant



What the future holds

The future looks bright for Romatec, as the company plans further expansion into new markets through the support of their quality product lines.

"We have expanded into California to support the oil and gas market there and we have been leveraged into that market through our long-standing relationships with our principle suppliers. We are the Apollo valve representative in northern California and we are now the Pentair distributor for the mining sector in California. This includes a number of knifegate valves such as Clarkson, L&M and Rovalve as well as high quality Keystone Butterfly valves and Vanessa triple offset valves under that Pentair portfolio," said Paul. "We are looking to strategically grow even more with Pentair and the opportunities are significant. Steve sits on their channel partner advisory council which meets twice a year to discuss how

investment and we made sure we had all elements ready in terms of having inventory in all the appropriate locations, marketing material, all the engineering data available either in print or online, before we even launched it internally to our staff. We are pretty excited about the opportunity, because it has allowed us to address a market that we have not previously been able to address, and we believe it to be a significant market. It is important that we target existing competition without cannibalizing the commitment we have to existing product lines and opportunities. It is an extension of the Romatec brand."

Services are also an integral part of Romatec's offerings, with the



establishment of several valve automation centers across Canada and in California, the distributor is able to provide clients with the sole source responsibility and technical services that many need.

"To me, it is an extension of the product. Providing actuation and automation to our products is something that our customers require. Sometimes it's mating product A to product B and the customer either doesn't have the resource, the technical competency, or even the willingness to do it," said Paul. "But they need the two products to be the solution to their problem, so we provide this as a complimentary service to selling our products. This is how we are able to meet our customers needs and provide a total solution."

"We ensure that everything is 100% tested. We have a strong documented QA process and carry the full responsibility of ensuring that the product our customer gets is meeting the quality elements," explained Steve. "If a customer attempts to automate a valve, and there is a problem, where do they go to figure out what element is at fault? Is it the valve? Is it the actuator? Is it the configuration of the mounting assembly? We take that responsibility away from them and we inherit that, so it's sole source responsibility. It's a core competency that brings value to our customers."

Pentair can improve market penetration and increase their sales, from a distributor perspective."

Romatec is also planning to further enhance their valve automation centers by bringing in additional automation products and expanding the centers' capabilities. The company is also in the midst of launching a new initiative into the municipal market and has recently signed agreements to carry the Crispin line of valves, as well as Ross Control Valves and Romac couplings for water & wastewater applications in this market. Romatec will also be promoting many of its core, industrial products into this market, including Keystone, Apollo and Apek. Romatec is pleased with the strength and depth the company will have in that market and the great growth potential made possible by advancing in that sector.

"We are going to continue to build on the business we have in eastern Canada, because we have a solid business there. The markets are diverse and staying on top of that diversity is going to be paramount for us to remain successful," said Paul. "We are going to continue to build on the business model that we have put in place in eastern Canada and continue to evolve with our customers. On the other hand, we have seen a 28% growth this year in Western Canada and in terms of strategic growth, western Canada and California are continuing to be a focus for us."