

UniTorq - Redefining Excellence

UniTorq has been a dedicated source for cutting-edge and reliable actuators and accessories for over 25 years. Offering a complete line of valve automation solutions with an experienced support team to guide customers with selection, installation, and project support, UniTorq maintains its founding principle to this day – to develop innovative valve actuation solutions that meet (and often exceed) the unique needs of their customers.

Valve World Americas had the opportunity to visit UniTorq's Duluth, Georgia headquarters to meet with President, Jack Curtin, to discuss the company's new product design, commitment to quality, and plans for the future.

By Sarah Bradley

UniTorq's philosophy has served the company well as it has grown to be one of the largest pneumatic actuator brands in the world. Providing commercial and industrial markets with intelligent, innovative solutions since its foundation in 1991, UniTorq products have been used in a wide variety of industries including oil, gas & fracking, pharmaceutical, food & beverage, refining, marine, chemical & petrochemical, power generation, and water & wastewater sectors, among others.

Established as a distributor of automation products in 1991, the company formed a relationship with Gianni Trevison in Milan, Italy and began to represent that manufacturer's products in the United States and Canada under the UniTorq name. Earlier in 2015, UniTorq created new American jobs and took greater control of the process when it began to source and assemble their own product, with machining, finishing, and testing being done at their Georgia facility.



President and owner, Jack Curtin spearheads the corporate objective to meet customer's requirements while adhering to the standards set by the quality management system, and driving continual process improvement throughout the entire company.

Offering one of the broadest product portfolios in the industry – featuring pneumatic and electric actuators, accessories, and controls – customers get a complete solution from the valve up. UniTorq has made significant investments in their in-house testing capabilities, including a coordinate measuring machine (CMM), another computerized numeric control machine (CNC), a torque test bench, which gives the company the ability to back up theoretical torque testing claims with actual data, and a spring testing station. Jack explained that UniTorq stands by quality and consistency and by having the internal control on all aspects of the production and testing process, it has helped the company maintain a strong position.

PUTTING PERFORMANCE TO THE TEST

"Consistency, especially in quality and capabilities is of the utmost importance to us. If you say your product offers a thousand inch pounds of torque, in ten years, that same model has to deliver that same torque. We have one of the few testing benches that can really test torque, which is typically tested theoretically. However, we have the capability of not only stating "theoretically" what the torque measures, but we can now back up those claims by testing to the actual value," said Jack.

At UniTorq quality means performance. Each product is quality tested at the factory and again at the warehouse before a UniTorq label is placed on the product. With manufacturing processes that strive for continuous improvement and implement exhaustive performance testing, they are confident that their products meet or exceed all applicable standards before they ever leave the facility. Remaining on top of industry trends and innovations has also



In 2015, UniTorq took greater control of the manufacturing process when it began to source and

allowed UniTorq to best decide where the future of pneumatic actuation will take the company. UniTorq has assembled unparalleled expertise that helps to solve problems for their customers, as well as contribute new technologies to the industry.

SETTING HIGHER STANDARDS

"Being part of technical associations and groups that focus on valve and valve processing helps us forecast what is happening in the industry and remain aware of any technical requirements. In 1991, our actuator was an engineered product but has developed into more of a commodity product, like a bronze gate valve or a butterfly valve. We acknowledge that it is now a commodity product, but we are competing in the market by producing our products domestically and insisting on the highest quality," said Jack. "We have been in the valve industry for a long time, and to ensure that actuator quality didn't decline, we knew there were some changes that needed to be implemented. Realizing that actuators have become a form of a commodity, we decided to set the bar for quality within the industry, which is what we have done with the newly designed M-Series product."

In coming up with the new product design, UniTorq incorporated three features to prevent actuator failure. First, the new



UniTorq hopes to set the bar higher with its new M-Series Actuator and Switch Package.

product offers a minimum of two teeth engagement at all times during the entire stroke of the actuator. Also, the M-Series actuator incorporates an improved travel stop design that provides 100 degrees of travel with ± 5 degrees of adjustment on the open and close stop. Lastly, the M-Series actuator also includes an upgraded top hat thrust bearing with the capacity to last millions of cycles, which will be warranted by the company. Another feature that will bring added value to the customer is the coating technology and corrosion protection that UniTorq can provide.



The CMM machine, above, lets UniTorq confirm the consistency of parts accurately and is one of several machines used to raise standards and assure higher quality.

COMMITTING TO HIGHER QUALITY

"In order to maintain a high quality product at an affordable price for our clients, we realized we had to do it ourselves. It was the *only* way we could accomplish that. It would have been very easy for us to go to the Pacific Rim and buy a finished product to put our name on, but that wasn't our goal," explained Jack Curtin. "Our goal is to give our customers the best possible product. We do import some of our components, however, the finished product is always inspected by our quality controller to ensure that the high standards that we insist upon internally as an ISO 9001:2008 certified company are continually met."



UniTorq has developed a test bench capable of determining torque beyond theoretical values. This allows them to back up their product claims with actual torque measurements.

ce with Innovative Solutions



assemble their own product with machining, finishing, and testing done at their Georgia facility.

Aside from their primary business in rack and pinion actuation, UniTorq offers a line of electric actuators that range from 150 inch pounds up to 450,000 foot pounds. The company also manufactures a line of limit switches under the Senitec brand.

"With the Senitec brand, the product is completely made in the USA. Castings, plastics and switches are all manufactured in Georgia. We're capable of providing our own solenoid valves for use on the actuators, and also sell positioners and manual overrides. We try to focus on the accessories for the rack & pinion and electric lines from the valve up," emphasized Jack.

distribution companies. We deal with very large valve OEMs that demand certain products, certain quantities, and demand certain delivery schedules be met, and we are able to do that. Then we also have the smaller distributors – the mom and pop distributors that are out there and have very different needs than a worldwide pipe, valve and fitting distribution leader, – and we are able to react to meet their needs as well."

In addition, the company maintains an extensive supply of product inventory on hand in order to quickly fulfill orders and reduce wait times. Jack believes that

purchase something – because we have one management group that is tight-knit, we can make decisions much faster than a lengthy corporate process, and that helps us continue to be reactionary."



One of the CNC machines being used to manufacture parts for Unitorq products.

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

Jack foresees some change in the future of the valve and actuator industry. He believes that UniTorq is in a good place and will remain in a strong position in the marketplace. With further capability toward expansion, Jack has established a strong succession plan for the company bringing in his two sons-in-law to strengthen the business objective and participate in the growth of the brand.

"We have been planning for months to find the best way to make a better quality,

competitively priced actuator in the United States. I saw the business going into the commodity side. Years ago, we would buy more domestically, but then price drove commodity purchasing overseas. Companies are looking for the cheapest product, but at a cost to quality, and that's not the game I want to get into – because nobody wins! Whether you are the largest or the smallest company, nobody wins when quality suffers," said Jack. "So what do you do? You create an actuator that is the bellwether of quality and the bellwether of services in the industry. That's what we are trying to create, and if in ten years somebody is saying 'if it was only like a 'UniTorq', then I was successful."



UniTorq foresees continued future growth as an industry leader with the implementation of a strong succession plan.



Having office, testing, assembly and warehouse centers all under the same roof, UniTorq is able to control quality and quickly respond to its customers' needs.

MEETING DEMANDS; REACTING TO NEEDS

UniTorq supports customers through a knowledgeable and dedicated sales & support staff that can assist in selecting the proper actuator based upon valve data and end point operating criteria. Their sales & support staff are readily available and accessible so that customers can get the answers they need quickly.

"We are a privately owned company that is able to give you a quality product consistently. We are very reactionary to our customers' needs, and that is our number one focus. It's (a) quality and (b) making sure the customers' requests are met," Jack revealed. "We have customers that are large

the company's reactionary nature is also beneficial in the reduction of lead times because it changes the way that UniTorq sources products.

"Our customers care about how fast they are going to receive their products and we try to have orders filled within two to three weeks. They care about affordable pricing and reliable quality. Because we're not subject to the bureaucracy of a publicly traded company, we can afford to source things differently – and we feel that we can remain very competitive in the marketplace and remain a leader in pricing and in quality," Jack explained. "This affords us flexibility. If there is something we want to change – the product design, the way we

UNITORQ AT A GLANCE

Founded: Jack Curtin founded the company in 1991.

Location: Office and warehouse facilities are conveniently located in Duluth, GA in close proximity to both Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and the Port of Savannah.

Product List: Pneumatic rack & pinion actuators, electric actuators, solenoid valves, manual declutchable gear overrides, pneumatic/electro-pneumatic/Smart digital positioners, various pneumatic accessories, and SeniTec Position Indicators

Industries Served: Oil, gas & fracking, pharmaceutical, food & beverage, refining, marine, chemical & petrochemical, power generation, and water & wastewater

Mission: UniTorq is committed to meeting our customer's requirements while adhering to the standards set by the quality management system and driving continual process improvement throughout the entire company. The quality objectives for UniTorq are established during the Management Review and are continuously monitored for effectiveness and improvement.

Images courtesy of Cheri Wenger Design Photography.

This Spotlight article is paid for by UniTorq. The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the profiled company and do not reflect the position of Valve World Americas.