

KACE Ball Valves:



An Entrepreneurial-Based Manufacturer

Cox would label KACE as an entrepreneurial-based manufacturing company. Being a medium size, family-owned company is one of the biggest factors in this consideration. "We are not a company that is owned by an investment firm. We make the decisions together and we can be nimble in putting them into action quickly," Brian Cox related. "We also have a very apparent company spirit that drives us to grow to meet the needs of our customers."

As an entrepreneurial-based manufacturer, KACE is constantly looking at the opportunities in the market and industry. Cox continued, "We talk to our customers and listen intently to find out their needs and problems they are facing. We can and will create those items that are needed specifically for them. With our team of engineers, KACE has the ability to design and deliver to our customer's exact specifications."

A Wide Variety

KACE Ball Valves manufactures a wide range of valves to meet their customers' needs. "We have provided anywhere from half inch valves all the way to 36-inch valves. We have the ability to produce up to 48-inch, and we are now just waiting on that order," said Cox. The company manufactures metal seated and soft-seated ball valves, high cycle and severe service ball valves, cryogenic ball valves, three-way ball valves, and more. KACE also has ISO 9001 and API 6D certifications, to name a few.

Cox has seen many companies buy valves from manufacturers who do not necessarily have the certifications or meet the required standards when it comes to their products, and they will see the valve fail or require maintenance quickly afterwards. This includes brand labeling of valves which is becoming more common within the industry. KACE does not want to do this to their customers. "We are a medium size company that is quickly expanding on a global scale, and that means we have one chance to get it right with our customers. If the product does not

live up to their standards, that customer is going to go to a different manufacturer," said Cox. "Our goal is to always make it right the first time. These are our designs, our valves, our people."

Special Valves

In addition to the many valves already offered by KACE, Cox likes to say that the company specializes in what he would call 'specials' or 'special valves'. "If a customer comes to us with something they need engineered for an issue within their process, we can build a valve that will address their needs," Cox related. The company has a team of engineers located in the United States and at their facility in China, and work to get those special projects completed for their customers. Cox continued, "A lot of larger companies will not take small jobs and one-off special valves because it is not cost-effective for them. For KACE, we will do whatever the customer needs. If they want the valve painted blue, we will paint it blue! If they want a new design, we will make one for them. I think that is why our customers keep coming back to us time and time again."

Quality and Price

By creating their own designs and manufacturing their own products, KACE Ball Valves can control the quality of their valves. High quality is, of course, one of the company's greatest focuses. "Having a higher quality product means that the price could be higher. Customers that come to us have learned the difference between low- and high-quality products the hard way, unfortunately. You might



After 24 years in the industry, one thing has always remained the same for KACE Ball Valves: the customers' needs will always come first. By offering custom specialty valves, KACE is able to cater to many customers in different markets and industries. Valve World Americas Journal had the opportunity to speak with Brian Cox, Vice President of Global Markets for KACE Ball Valves, about the company's current and future goals, how they meet their customers' needs, and how they stay on top of trends that are emerging in the industry.

By Brittani Schroeder and Sarah Bradley

KACE Ball Valves began as a vision and quickly grew from there. Jim Cox knew in 1995 that he wanted to manufacture a new line of ball valves and have the ability to control all designs and ensure top quality. "Jim Cox, my father, comes from a Navy background and came out of the military not knowing what exactly the future held for him. He was introduced to a gentleman that worked in the valve industry, and thankfully that person took a chance on a young veteran," said Brian Cox.

Jim Cox started in a sales position in the industry, and quickly became one of the strongest salesmen in the company.

When the company he worked for was bought by a larger firm, Jim Cox started on his mission to open a new valve company that would begin to change the industry. Process Resources was established in 1985 as a valve supplier for the North American Market. After much success in the ball valve industry, Jim saw the need to begin manufacturing valves of their own design. Therefore in 1995, Process Resources started their own line of ball valves by the name of KACE. Process Resources Inc. owns KACE Ball Valves and Jim has been with them since the beginning – and having a well-known valve distributor backing the KACE brand was a great start for Cox and his vision.



The Customer Comes First

buy a less expensive valve and think you have scored a great deal, but suddenly that valve starts failing regularly, the company has to service it regularly, the plant is losing money the longer it is down, and in the end they realize they should have invested in a higher quality valve in the first place. That is when they come to us," said Brian Cox. He further explained that the competition between manufacturers is, therefore, based on quality rather than pricing.

Manufacturing in China

In 2009, KACE Ball Valves moved their manufacturing facility into China. The goal was to create their own valve designs, manufacture these valves with their own employees, and have the ability to ensure quality standards. "We have total control over quality and what comes out of our facility. Once we had that secured, we started on our first designs for our G Series ball valve, along with floating and trunnion ball valves," explained Cox.

KACE has invested a lot of time and money into their overseas manufacturing facility, and now have one of the best cryogenic test facilities in the world. The facility is completely computerized and digitized, and the company can test all their valves before they are sent out to the customers. Brian Cox's father, Jim Cox, also spends over half the year overseeing operations at the China facility. "Jim will go over to China to monitor quality control and other operations at the factory. I personally spend about eight to ten weeks a year there as well, because it is not just a factory to us—it is our company 100%, just located in China," said Cox.

A Global Presence

KACE Ball Valves learned the importance of being a global company very early on. It all started with their headquarters in Sugar Land, Texas and the facility in China. Today, the company also has offices and personnel in Singapore and Germany, along with a widespread outside salesforce that covers North and South America.

"Having a strong global presence is very important to us. A lot of production is done overseas, and the Middle East and China markets are growing rapidly, which means many plants are going up as well," Brian Cox explained. "There is also a great deal of development here on the Gulf Coast. We know that we want to be able to hit all these markets, so we cannot just be available in the U.S.A. We need to be in as many locations as possible."

Focus on the Customer

KACE has one main focus: their customers' needs. Cox explained, "I think two of the best things we can do is concentrate on what we are good at and put the value of our customers first. If we were to branch out into the unknown areas of the industry, we may lose focus of our loyal customers – and we do not want to forget them. So, we stick with what we know."

Customers call KACE not only for their industry knowledge, but also because of how quickly answers can be given for



special requests. "A decision process only has to go through three people—myself, Jim Cox the owner, and the Vice President of Operations Shelley Schmitz. We do not have to go through a large governing board to make decisions for customers, or if we are choosing a new distribution partner. Instead of giving an answer after a few weeks, we can give an answer in a matter of hours," said Cox.

Full Service and Repair

Providing services to their customers is another thing that KACE prides themselves on. "If one of our customers calls us and says something has gone wrong, we are able to show up at their doorstep within 48 hours to assess the problem. We can repair the valves and make it right, and I think that is why we have retained our customers over the last two and a half decades," Brian Cox said.

KACE and PRI also have a full-service repair and automation facility for their customers. "We do not represent any specific brand of actuator automation package – we let the customers tell us what they want, and we will make recommendations, but it is ultimately their choice. Once they have decided what actuator to use, we then pair it with our valves, and we have the ability to complete the full automation package in-house. We can also handle the repairs in house with our full machine shop," Cox explained. The facility is also located right in the capital of oil and gas in the Americas – an ideal placement for KACE and PRI. With Service crews on call around the clock, KACE is still putting the customers and their needs first.

"Frequently, we hear customers telling us that the valves they have used in the past only achieved 500,000 cycles, and we can hardly believe it," Cox related. "We can deliver a G series metal seated valve that will reach up to two million plus cycles. There are times when a new customer will want to install a valve to test in their particular service conditions. We have never had a valve returned after this test period and customers continue to buy more based on the reliability. The only time our valves come out of service is when there is an issue with the actuator, or the valve needs general maintenance."

Cox has also seen a lot of companies trying to update old valves in their plants and force these old valve designs to do work they were not originally manufactured to do. "Valves are designed for very specific applications, and when people try to adapt those same valves for a different market or application, it will not work. These valves will fail, undoubtedly," said Cox. KACE's key to success in this industry is listening to their customer. There are many valve manufacturers within the polyethylene and polypropylene process that are not able to perform as promised. KACE can provide a product in the G series valve that was specifically designed for this critical process.

Looking Forward

KACE is always looking to better their processes and facilities. Recently, the company bought an additional six and a half acres located just five miles from their current office location in Sugar Land, Texas. "We are building a new facility right now, and it will be about 60,000 square-feet – we are currently in a 20,000 square-foot facility," explained Cox. "Once that facility is ready, we will be obtaining our API 6D licence here in the U.S.A., which will give us the opportunity to assemble and manufacture here in the States as well. For some of our customers, this is really important, so we are very excited to be able to offer this to them in the near future." Cox continued, "Once that building is complete within the next year, we will be able to help our customers even more than we are now—and that has always been our goal."

Tracking Industry Trends

KACE is present in many different industries, but one large and quickly growing industry they see is the polyethylene and polypropylene business. "There are a lot of different players out there trying to compete in this industry, and that is what we want to do as well. It is also a very specialized market, so you really have to know what you are doing," said Cox. He went on to explain that manufacturers in this industry need to be able to build a high cycle valve that can stand up to a very severe process.



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