

Mixing It Up With Marion

Marion President Doug Grunder discusses the future of processing mixers.

Chem.Info: What industries does Marion Mixers serve?

Doug Grunder, President, Marion Mixers: Our core areas of expertise are in food, plastic, chemical and mineral industries. We also have extensive experience within other industries such as pharmaceutical, petrochemical, coatings and animal feed.

CI: Where do you see the largest growth potential for industrial process equipment and why?

DG: New product innovation, plant expansions and cost reduction initiatives drive demand for our products. The chemical industry is constantly improving production processes to meet the growing demand for innovative new products to an ever-increasing global population. Our product design is ideally suited for processing large volumes of abrasive or hard-to-handle recycled ingredients. Public demand for reusing natural resources is further spurring this industry to invest in capital equipment.

CI: What advice would you give plant engineers, operations managers and other decision makers who are sourcing industrial mixing equipment?

DG: Pay attention to details—not all mixers are alike. Work with a manufacturer who guarantees the performance of the mixer within the specified application. The manufacturer should additionally follow an established product development process:

- Gather detailed product and process information.
- Validate performance through testing.
- Determine horsepower, start-up torque, mix time and other design criteria for each project. Manufacturers should be able to predict how much horsepower will be utilized, how much shaft deflection will occur under load and how efficiently the mixer will work.
- Provide AutoCAD drawings of the design to ensure the equipment interfaces with other upstream or downstream equipment.
- Manufacture the equipment with documented reviews for quality control and safety features.
- Measure to verify the equipment performs as anticipated.

CI: What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing the processing industry today?

DG: Processors are facing tough obstacles such as: determining an environmental agenda, dealing with globalization, navigating turbulent financial markets and more wisely using energy. But equally important are the day-to-day challenges of production optimization and product quality. Manufacturing flexibility, mixing efficiency and sanitation are critical to chemical producers.

CI: Is there a product offering from Marion that you expect significant interest from in the next three to six months?

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DG: Yes, we expect our abrasion-resistant continuous mixers for recycled materials and our newly designed 3,600-RPM chopper seal to do well.

CI: How would you characterize Marion Mixers product line to someone who is not familiar with your product offerings?

DG: [Grunder ticks off the following characteristics:]

- Customized solutions for each application.
- Guaranteed to meet performance criteria.
- Engineered for decades of reliable, repeatable service.
- Easy-to-clean, sanitary designs.
- Rugged abrasion-resistant designs with field-replaceable paddles, arms and caps.

CI: You provide both on-premise plant testing and lab testing at your facility. Which would you recommend and why?

DG: We prefer customers visit our test facility in Marion, IA. Our technical sales team works free of charge with customers to optimize development processes to maximize return on investment. The customer is also encouraged to tour our production facility to inspect work that is already in process.

If customers desire, test equipment can be shipped to their location free of charge for up to three weeks. For qualified applications, our representatives attend the testing to provide assistance in qualifying the process.

CI: What's better: a ribbon or a paddle agitator?

DG: Marion builds both kinds of agitators. However, the type of agitator recommended depends on the application:

- A ribbon agitator is good for blending materials of like size, shape and density, such as powders or granular ingredients. Ribbon agitators are most commonly used in food or chemical industries in which bulk products are repeatedly blended. The ribbon-style agitator also produces more shear than the paddle.
- A paddle agitator is best when blending materials of dissimilar size, shape and density. They can be used in both batch- and continuous-style mixers. Paddle agitators are additionally ideal for mixing friable ingredients without damage or oversized particles without binding. Paddle agitators are efficient with batch sizes down to 20 percent of the rated capacity of the mixer and are available with replaceable paddles for abrasive applications.
- Hybrid-style agitators feature paddles on the outer with reversing ribbons on the inner. This design provides superior mix performance and clean-out with 0.020-inch clearances to the trough. The inner ribbons level the product load, allowing larger quantities of ingredients per batch.

CI: What are the benefits for someone choosing your brand when selecting mixing equipment?

DG: When designing and building a new mixer, we follow a six-step development process that involves documentation, research, testing, design, custom manufacture and inspection, and on-site startup assistance. Moreover, we stand behind each of our hand-crafted machines with a performance guarantee. Our entire team of engineers, fabricators and quality control people has one goal in

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mind—to provide the best long-term value in mixing equipment for our customers. *Doug Grunder is the president of Marion Mixers and Lowe Industries. He has more than 24 years of experience in new product research and development, new business development and strategic planning.*

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