Loyalty Leads The Way

By Glenn Webb, Senior Product Specialist, Pump Solutions Group

Loyalty is a trait in short supply these days. Baseball players who have been nurtured by an organization for upwards of a decade will brazenly chase the biggest free-agent contract. People will change their cell-phone provider at the drop of a hat, tempted by cute commercials or eye-catching special offers. When you consider the automobile industry, there are very few “Buick men” around anymore. Drivers now buy the car that most catches their fancy when it’s time to replace the old one. What these examples show is that many people are not averse to terminating what had most likely been a pretty successful relationship in search of that potentially “greener grass” on the other side of the fence. What they don’t show is how many end up regretting their decision in the long run.

By nature, Gary Eaton is a loyal guy. He started working in the energy industry in the 1980s and for the past dozen years has worked for the same company — Ely Energy of Tulsa, OK. Eaton joined the organization in 1997 as Managing Director.

Eaton is a good fit at Ely Energy because a look at the company’s history shows a firm loyal to its roots. A world-renowned design-and-fabrication company that serves a global client base through the design, manufacture and commission of engineered products, Ely is best known for LPG vaporization and air-gas (SNG, or Synthetic Natural Gas) mixing applications. The branches of Ely Energy’s family tree stretch all the way back to the late 19th century.

In 1898, Robert Hansen founded Energy Systems Inc., in Minnesota. ESI became a pioneer in the design and manufacture of equipment for LPG vaporization and air-gas mixing applications in the mid-1900s. The technologies created by ESI allowed propane or LPG to be blended together to simulate natural gas for fuel-switching applications. This innovative technology became critical during the turbulent energy years of the 1970s. SNG—or “synthetic natural gas,” which uses LPG as its feedstock, simulates the combustion characteristics of natural gas. SNG became a popular alternative to the real thing, which had become scarce and expensive. Today, SNG remains relevant in the global-energy matrix as changing demographics, as well as both availability and deliverability of natural gas, place pressure on fuel-supply scenarios.

“By mixing LPG and air, we simulate the characteristics of natural gas for use as an emergency backup supply, or in areas where natural gas delivery is unreliable or not available,” explained Eaton. “That is the historic core of our business.”

Energy Systems Inc. was acquired by Ely Energy in the early 1980s, where it has continued to expand its footprint in the LPG and SNG markets. Ely Energy has

grown to become known as “the worldwide leader in large-scale SNG and LPG vaporization systems.” Working off that success, Ely Energy has also diversified its operations to include an Environmental Systems Group that produces ammonia-based de-NOx systems for air-pollution reduction; an Essential/Edible Oils Group that specializes in solvent extraction, refining and deodorization; and a Process Equipment Group that designs and builds equipment for the utility, petrochemical and general industrial markets.

But through all of this diversification, Ely Energy remains loyal to its bread-and-butter: LPG vaporization and air-gas mixing.

Pump It Up “All LPG systems require a pump and we have used a variety of pumps over the years, but for most applications, Blackmer is the pump of choice,” said Eaton. “We’ve found them to be extremely durable, extremely reliable. They were using Blackmer pumps before I got here, so Blackmer has been the pump of choice here for more than 20 years.”

“For us, it’s exclusively the LGL line, the 1-1/4-inch through 3-inch pumps; those are our babies,” said Eaton. “We almost never deviate from using those pumps. In that part of the hydraulic map, that’s our pump. We know the pump, we’ve had great reliability with the pump and great service from Blackmer. There’s really no reason to change and it’s something we’ve never really talked about.”

Blackmer’s LGL pumps have been engineered specifically for LPG and NH3 (ammonia) flow applications. They utilize Blackmer’s renowned sliding-vane technology to deliver optimum operation in a variety of processes, such as cylinder filling, motor fueling, bulk transfer and vaporization. The presence of a patented cavitation-suppression liner cushions the effects of collapsing vapor bubbles, allowing the pumps to operate with less noise, vibration and wear when compared to competitive pumps. In fact, the cavitation-suppression technology can result in up to a 12-percent reduction in the noise level on the factory floor.

In addition to the LGL sliding vane pumps, Ely Energy has also had occasion to use Blackmer Reciprocating Gas Compressors in several applications, specifically the LB161 and LB361 models. Blackmer compressors are designed for maximum performance and reliability under the most severe service conditions, and the LB Series models not only transfer liquid, but can recover vapors, as well, which is like adding 3 percent capacity to every load. LB compressors can handle the transfer of propane, butane, LPG and ammonia.

“They’re not a huge compressor user, but when they do need to use a compressor, they choose Blackmer,” said Glenn Webb, Blackmer’s Senior Product Specialist, Reciprocating Compressors. “Gary Eaton’s extremely loyal. If you do something for him, he’ll do something for you. He doesn’t forget when you’ve done something for him.”

Into The Future In April of 2008, Blackmer became an operating company within the New York-based Dover Corporation’s Pump Solutions Group (PSG), Redlands, CA, a conglomeration of six of the world’s leading industrial-pump manufacturers.

These companies give PSG the leading manufacturer of sliding-vane pumps (Blackmer), air-operated double diaphragm pumps (Wilden), chemical metering pumps (Neptune), centrifugal pumps (Griswold), eccentric disc pumps (Mouvex) and diaphragm pumps (Almatec).

One of the goals of PSG is to use the individual companies and their capabilities to create synergies across a wide array of industries and operations. Already, that may be paying dividends with Ely Energy, as Eaton foresees a day when his company will commit some of its business to other PSG firms.

“We’ve already had discussions with Glenn to include some centrifugal pumps,” said Eaton. “We’re very intrigued with the other offerings that PSG has that we weren’t quite aware of. We’ve been quoting a lot more process-related work outside of the LPG industry and PSG has a family of pumps that we can use. I think there will be some business with them in the future.”

Conclusion When it comes right down to it, when you buy anything—from a cell phone to a car to a $20-million-a-year third baseman—you have one simple request: that it works when you need it to. And if it does, you’re more likely to buy a similar replacement when that time comes, or a second model when you’re looking to expand.

It’s no different in the manufacturing industry. When equipment is bought and installed, there is one main requirement: when you push the start button, it better begin operating and it better deliver the performance you expect.

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For more information on Blackmer’s full line of pumps and compressors, go to www.blackmer.com *[2].*

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