



# STREAMLINING OPERATIONS

DOVER PRECISION COMPONENTS AIMS TO LEVERAGE COLLECTIVE EXPERTISE

BY BRENT HAIGHT

**D**over Precision Components, a provider of performance-critical solutions for rotating and reciprocating machinery, has united the Cook Compression, Inpro/Seal, and Waukesha Bearings brands under one operating company. These brands were originally brought together in November 2015 to broaden product offerings, expand global resources, and apply operational efficiencies to better serve customers in the energy and industrial markets. Since then, synergies between the brands have extended engineering and materials expertise, opened new avenues for innovation, promoted best practices in manufacturing, and advanced quality and continuous improvement efforts.

*Gas Compression Magazine* sat down with Marcell Ulrichs, president of Dover Precision Components, to discuss the new operating company and the outlook for the gas compression industry.

## **What prompted the formation of Dover Precision Components?**

In 2015 we brought together Cook Compression, Inpro/Seal, and Waukesha Bearings. The unifying element is that all three companies provide performance-determining solutions for rotating and reciprocating machinery. Right away, we had success with internal technology exchanges. For example, Cook has extensive expertise in materials science, and Inpro/Seal began using materials from Cook. By bringing these companies together we have been able to leverage technologies and create economies of scale.

Now we have introduced a new identity for the group – Dover Precision Components; established a headquarters in The Woodlands, Texas, USA; and implemented business practices around being a single company, rather than operating as several individual companies.

Cook Compression produces reciprocating compressor valves, rod rings, packing cases, piston rings, rider bands, pistons, rods, and more. (Pictured Far Left) Inpro/Seal's custom-engineered system and bearing protection products increase rotating equipment reliability. (Left)

The introduction of the Dover Precision Components name supports our strategic partnerships with original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and end users and will improve the visibility of our broad capabilities to improve performance of rotating and reciprocating assets. The name will also provide a common identity for our customers and employees around the globe.

#### Discuss the products and services offered by Dover Precision Components.

Our product lines hold number one or number two market positions globally. Cook Compression delivers custom-engineered valves, sealing technologies, pistons and rods, as well as repair and reconditioning services and advanced technical support, for reciprocating compressors. Inpro/Seal designs and manufactures bearing protection and shaft seals to increase the reliability of rotating equipment. Waukesha Bearings is a leading provider of engineered hydrodynamic fluid film bearings, active magnetic bearing systems, and brush seals for high-performing turbomachinery.

It's exciting to see how the technologies come together and how we can better serve the needs of our customers. Under Dover Precision Components, we can utilize knowledge and expertise across multiple business units to implement a solution. Some of the same customer challenges exist across our entire business platform. As Dover Precision Components, we can easily share technology and information to improve the customer experience.

#### How have customer needs and expectations changed in the last few years?

Customer service is becoming more and more important. Our responsiveness is more critical than ever before with regard to providing product and repair services quickly.

OEMs are competing fiercely for market share. They are creating better machines through advancements in technology and materials science. We are continually investing in research and development to partner with OEMs to assist them in new developments.

On the aftermarket side, the ability to help customers avoid unplanned shutdowns and improve reliability is paramount. It is extremely important that we are able to provide upgrades to help operators extend runtimes, for example, and come back to them with proposals on how they can optimize their fleet without having to incur huge costs.

As more and more experienced workers leave the industry due to retirement, we must also continue to build our knowledge base so that we are ready and able to address any challenge a customer might bring to us. We want to be recognized as a problem-solver with very good customer service. If we can maintain and further develop these critical areas, it will be a big benefit to the industry, to our customers, and ultimately to our positioning in the marketplace.

The approach we take is partnering with customers and working with them to find the right solution for their specific needs. We make technology fit the realities of the customer. We want to develop a solution, together with the customers, that meets their pain point, is affordable, is scalable and retrofittable, and can be implemented by their existing personnel rather than requiring an engineering specialist to spend days on-site to implement and teach a solution that is ultimately too big and too complicated to really help them.



The compact Zephyr active magnetic bearing controller provides 5-axis control and high processing performance for complex algorithms, along with remote commissioning, monitoring, and diagnostics.



Waukesha Bearings applies proprietary materials and design features, like the Flexure Pivot tilt pad and integral squeeze film damper technology shown here, to optimize hydrodynamic fluid film bearing performance.

**In your opinion, which regions hold the most opportunity for growth within the gas compression market in the next five to 10 years?**

We very much follow where GDP growth is happening. Some of the most important geographic regions are the United States, the European Union, China, and India. From my perspective, the United States, the European Union, and China are all geographic areas where we need to be present. This is where the OEMs are, and this is where a large, installed equipment base exists.

I believe the United States offers big potential in terms of growth on several fronts – the investment climate is very positive in the United States; LNG is presenting enormous opportunity; and forecasts predict a continued increase in natural gas production and demand, driven by consumption in the industrial sector. I think the United States will be a strong market for many years to come for the gas industry.

**What are some of the biggest challenges facing the industry today and how is Dover Precision Components addressing these challenges?**

The aging workforce, together with a lack of people entering the industry, are among the biggest challenges facing the natural gas industry today. It is important that we train well and that we document our procedures and practices so that when someone retires, there is no gap. Everything we do is based on deep domain knowledge. Training the next generation and giving them the tools and opportunity to succeed is essential. We hold a strong market position worldwide and that is due to expertise built up by many people over many decades. Continuing leadership in the industry does not happen by itself; it requires many people doing many things right. At Dover Precision Components, we have an excellent team, and we are committed to investing in them.

**What's next for the gas compression industry?**

I expect that there will be more consolidation happening on the OEM side. At the moment, valuations are pretty high for industrial companies. I will not be surprised to see more consolidation happening when company valuations return to levels that are more in tune with where they should be.

As an industry, I think we will see a higher focus on tangible improvements and even greater demand for proven results from end users.

As a supplier, it is critical that we continue to provide better service to the customer, and that we look at it from a technology perspective. Twenty years ago, technology in the professional world was more advanced than in our private lives. Today, technology in personal life is more advanced than in professional life. For example, you can track a pizza order in real time using your smartphone. You know when it's been put into the oven, when it is out for delivery en route to your home.

We are now seeing that level of expectation in the industrial world. "Where is this valve repair order in the process? When did it ship?" The accessibility of information is going to transition more into our professional lives as a result of what we have in our private lives, and companies need to make sure they are able to improve their service levels and provide digitally enabled value-added services and information to the customer.

**What's next for Dover Precision Components?**

We take great pride in the legacies of our brands, and we aim to further strengthen those brands under the umbrella of Dover Precision Components. At the same time, our customers should expect continued expansion of our portfolio to meet their broad needs for equipment reliability and performance. I invite customers to deepen their partnerships with us and discover the full value of what we can offer. 