

Slump: the catalyst behind positive pumping changes

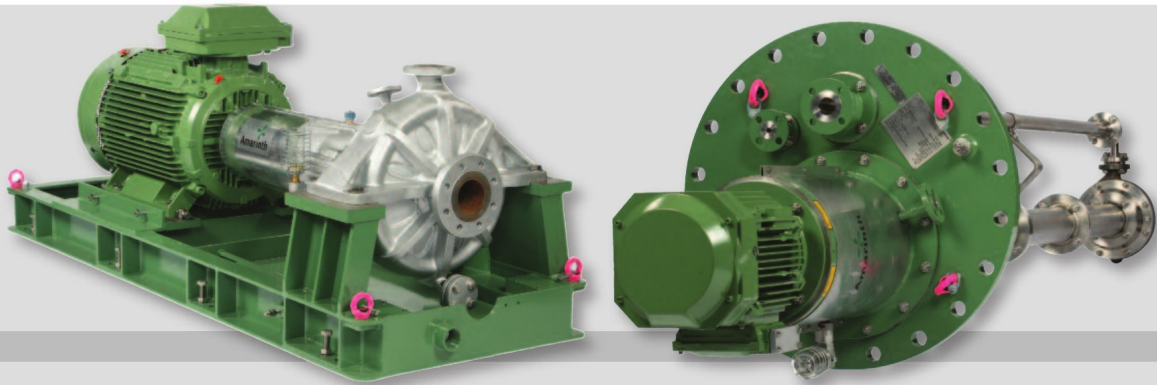
While the oil price plunge left many sector players reeling, British pump specialist Amarith quickly deployed its expertise and agility to secure and then expand its global operation. “Recession makes you fitter, with companies with this agility having to tone up and reinvent themselves and find opportunities outside the main income streams,” said Business Development Director Alex Briggshaw. Colin Chinery reports.

AS a global leader in the design, application and manufacture of centrifugal pumps and associated equipment for the oil and gas industry, Amarith shared the sector grief following the 2014 oil price collapse.

But while large British companies with heavy overheads closed or contracted, sometimes with losses running into millions, the Suffolk company’s dexterity and strong technical and human resources enabled it to survive and re-position for growth.

“While overhead reliance forced many of our competitors to retract, we continue to be a privately-owned British pump manufacturer with a size and agility that enables us to leverage those things which we have always been good at – our ability to design products on demand,” said Business Development Director Alex Briggshaw.

“Over the last two years, instead of battening down the hatches and cutting overheads like others have done, the nature of how we operate our business has enabled us to remain busy, and increase both our API range of products and our capability as a technical solutions provider.”



Founded in 2002 in response to what Mr Brigginsshaw described as “a deficit in technical and engineering support on the end-user side of the value chain”, Amarith grew with the development of bespoke, exotic alloy components that can be utilised in particularly challenging applications. 16 years on, and world-leading clients include BP, Shell, ExxonMobil and Halliburton.

Winning portfolio

Its portfolio is comprehensive and impressive: horizontal and vertical API (American Petroleum Institute Standard) 610 pumps, many interchangeable with the Girdlestone ranges; pressure vessels with inbuilt condition monitoring for pumps and mixers; condensate recovery units manufactured incorporating the innovative Ci-Nergy intelligent variable speed control system; and bespoke packages and skids built to order.

All of this is backed by state-of-the-art e-commerce technologies delivering a 24/7 support enabling customers to select pumps, place orders on-line, and then track each stage of manufacture through to delivery, anytime, anywhere in the world.

“We work in a very transparent basis by giving our clients 24/7 web based access,” said Mr Brigginsshaw. “If you are prepared to do that, and bare all, you have to be prepared to manage it in a way to ensure

we get, as we do, 98% of our products delivered on time. It’s a very different approach from what our competitors are doing.”

Amarith’s success in winning repeat business is thanks to its ability to successfully manage critical manufacturing milestones and deliver outstanding equipment when required, said Mr Brigginsshaw.

“And because we do all our due diligence on individual specs from paint to welding, and manage our sub suppliers, they recognise that we understand their individual site specifications. This gives them very great confidence in us.”

The business development director explained the collapse of a number of providers left OEM pump products unsupported, enabling Amarith to leverage its experience and forge excellent relationships with major end users.

“Direct customers have come to us recognising our experience and know-how, and asking us to supply a dimensionally or hydraulically exact replacement backed by our ongoing support network.”

Amarith differentiates itself from many competitors by putting the same emphasis on the contract management of a product as it does on its design and supply.

Mr Brigginsshaw added: “Most of our competitors are late in delivery because the technical specification knowledge and awareness and the ability to meet the more demanding certification





side of projects makes it a very difficult contract to manage. This is an area where we are very much market leaders.”

Over the last five years, Amarith made a strategic decision to invest in increasing its supply of a wider range of API products, developing an automatic top-up unit, expanding its choice of API pumps by type, and advancing its skid package capabilities.

The skid package niche grew after a request from a key customer for a specific pump manifold product. Impressed by the outcome, other clients approached Amarith.

“They realised we had the know-how to deliver these complex packages for their applications, and as a business it has moved us away from being purely a pump manufacturer to one offering turnkey solutions,” recalled Mr Brigginsaw.

In 2016, Amarith delivered a complex ‘plug-and-play’ API 610 pump skid package for one of the UK’s largest undeveloped oil finds, the 110m deep Mariner Platform, 140km southeast of the Shetland Islands.

“Skid packages are an area we have concentrated on over the last five years and it has really taken off,” acknowledged Mr Brigginsaw.

More recently, Amarith has been building its capabilities and reputation in the power generation market, delivering pump products and services to some of Europe’s leading companies, working at sites such as Sizewell, Sellafield, EPR, Ely, Dungeness and Didcot.

“We have actively forged and created some very positive relationships with the power industry in supporting them both with existing hardware challenges, and in particular, supporting them on the obsolete products and pumps they have on a number of their sites throughout the UK,” stated Mr Brigginsaw.

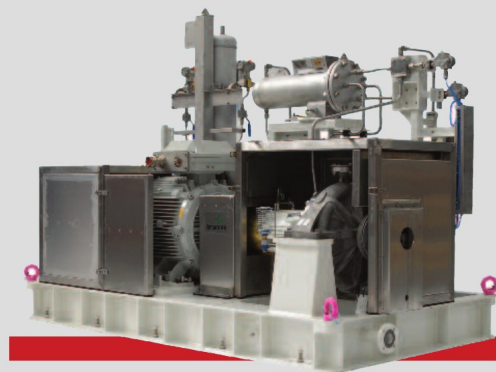
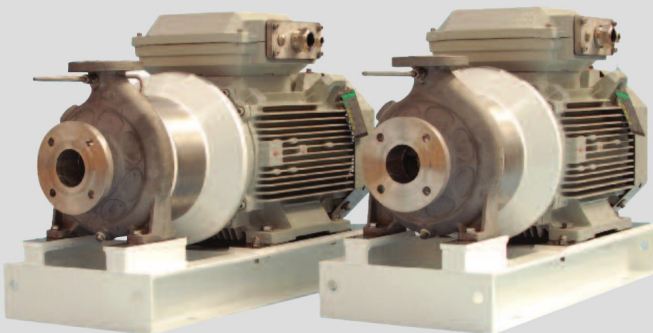
“Widening our offering has opened additional doors and opportunities for us.”

Located in rural East Suffolk in a business park on the former Bentwaters USAF air base, near Ipswich, Amarith has a “very community-driven aspect,” said Mr Brigginsaw.

People – the success factor

“We have been operating as a successful business for nearly 20 years and among our staff of 50, we still have people that started on the opening day. Some in the design, assembly and test bay areas have over 35 years of background in pumps. We have this huge resource of experience, and because of our size, culture, and very collaborative environment and structure, our staff retention is very strong. It’s been a huge factor in our success.

“Recession makes you fitter, with companies with this agility having to tone up and reinvent themselves and find opportunities outside the main income streams. A company of our size and very open structure has the ability to do this, and we have managed to retain our skilled engineers and hydraulic designers, keeping





them busy by continuing to invest in a recession on research and development and working on new product ranges. We have always believed the market would start to pick up again since it's one that's globally required."

As a world-wide supplier, Amarith has a two-market philosophy said Mr Brigginslaw; the established and the developing.

"We have established a market hold within Asia Pacific and another in Dubai and the Middle East. Now we are developing markets in the Gulf Region, where we have Kuwaiti Oil Company (KOC) accreditation and in the last year have successfully supplied equipment to them.

"We see this as an opening opportunity, and we are actively driving this through additional resource to establish it as the same as our Abu Dhabi market."

Europe in target

Europe - previously disregarded because of high Middle East and Asia Pacific activity - is another emerging market, noted Mr Brigginslaw.

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SCHUNK CARBON TECHNOLOGY

Schunk Carbon Technology's technical team has been working closely with Amarith to improve the performance and working life of the bearings in Amarith's vertical pumps.

As a development partner, Schunk Carbon Technology is also working with Amarith on new projects to ensure the correct materials for specific applications are chosen.

editorial mention

"Over the last year, we have actively developed the European market through some of the European contractors, and taken on an additional export sales manager who will be concentrating on the Kazakhstan market."

While the oil and gas market has seen a subtle and positive change in the last six months, Amarith has stood by its core values and beliefs, said Mr Brigginslaw.

"And that is always to put the customer at the heart of everything we do. We have expanded on what we deliver, and those core values will always be there.

"Over the past two years, we have got fighting fit for the upturn which we believe is now here. At the moment, the barrel price is averaging \$73, new projects are coming on line, and our guys are out in the field. We are subtly confident that this upturn will continue into next year and for the next two or three years. At Amarith, we envisage a significant increase in business. No question." ■

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