

PUMPED FOR SUCCESS

As businesses around the world shut up shop in 2020, bespoke pump specialist Amarith grew its place in the market. The company's Commercial Director Alex Briggingshaw talked to Inside Oil and Gas about 2020, being carbon neutral, and what gives the company a competitive edge. Article by Harriet Jones.

Adaptability is a key strand of Amarith's DNA. The British pump specialist embodies the principles of being able to flex and change in everything from its approach to design to how it has grown through the storm of 2020.

Amarith is the last privately owned pump manufacturer in the UK, designing and manufacturing bespoke API pumps. The company is growing, in part because of what the world has thrown at it. From plunging oil prices in the past to global pandemics, the company has proved that it has what it takes to lead the field.

The company's Commercial Director Alex Briggingshaw is in a buoyant mood. He explained: "It has been very, very hard, but if you don't reinvent and approach things in a different way, you won't survive. We have grown over the last 18 months and we are incredibly proud of that."

As other companies furloughed staff throughout 2020, Amarith was busy ensuring online connections united its staff in order to give customers the level of service they are used to.

"I'll be honest, it's not the same as being in an open-plan office where we can quickly get the people around the table that we need, but we achieved something as close to that as possible and we did it straight away. We wanted our staff and our customers to know that the culture we had developed since we launched in 2002 was very much alive as the world seemed to be shutting down," Mr Briggingshaw reflected.

"We have always wanted to be the first choice supplier of highly specialised pump solutions and that was more important than ever in 2020. Being able to reinvent is part of our success and the past year and a half has been a fantastic period of growth."

"I'm a firm believer that you can't motivate someone, but you can create an environment where people feel motivated, and making sure that we do that is part of our lifeblood," he said. "I want the people that work for us to test themselves."

He added: "It is always important to ask 'if this can't be done, what can be done? What are the solutions?' That philosophy is at the core of how we operate. Our staff know how valued they are and as a result, they are part of our mission to lead the field through creativity and commitment."

Green manufacturer

Amarith takes a pragmatic approach to everything it does. So getting to grips with the growing concern for the future of the planet meant looking for immediate solutions that start at home. As a result, the business is now 100% carbon neutral. A 100kw solar farm on the company's grounds powers just about everything needed and if a top-up is necessary, the company can tap into another green energy supply from the anaerobic digester plant on the business park where it is based.

"We are massively proud to be a green manufacturer," Mr Briggingshaw declared. "It was hard work to achieve what we did, but we did it because it is the right thing for the world. The company is also working on helping its customers to become greener. There is an appetite for energy efficiency and carbon reduction and we are working very hard to help our customers achieve that in a commercially viable way."

Part of that process is making sure that Amarith is at the forefront when it comes to technology. This means that Amarith is also expanding its remote monitoring capabilities to make sure its designs incorporate the most effective solutions.

Mr Briggingshaw said: "We utilise the latest technology from a design and engineering perspective. We have all the latest software and we have expanded our testing facilities, which includes

a new testing tank. We are continuously expanding our capabilities to help customers reach their objectives."

The clamour to move meetings online during 2020 was another example of how Amarith is well practiced at getting a head start. The company has been big supporters of video calling for years.

Mr Briggingshaw said: "Video calling has been important to us for a long time. We need to be able to look our customers in the eye and show them that we understand them. That is how we have always done business and that is how we will carry on."

Looking ahead

Amarith always has one eye on the future. Mr Briggingshaw revealed the link on the company's strategic plan for the next 18 months has only just dried.

"At the moment we are in a strong place. We have delivered against our five-year plan despite the adversities in the market. Five years ago we said we wanted to be less reliant on oil and gas and expand our product range. We can now say we have achieved that."

Amarith has nudged into other sectors including the power industry, with Mr Briggingshaw revealing his team had received some "really positive kudos" for obsolete pump supply and direct support for the likes of EDF, which is opening up new opportunities Amarith will continue to capitalise on. However, Mr Briggingshaw is confident that Amarith's tailored approach to solutions for customers within the oil and gas industry will remain despite other pump manufacturers reducing their support to the industry.

He concluded: "I believe there will always be a niche market that requires what we do because we do it well. But this past year has taught us one thing and that is to expect the unexpected and to be prepared for change. We will always be capable of that because we like to be ahead of the curve."

Because the company has always held the belief that 'prevention is better than cure', Amarith was primed to deal with a world in crisis.

"We picked up business orders globally as a result of being actively open for business, safely. For example, we developed state-of-the-art technical remote testing via video conferencing and online assessments that have helped keep our customers operational."

As Mr Briggingshaw highlighted, Amarith went as far as expanding into the African market during the second half of 2020.

"We have successfully grown into many parts of the world and we decided to take on an African sales manager, he has been fabulously successful laying foundations and he has just secured the first order from the territory," he said. "We feel confident that we will see growth in that market."

Amarith, revealed Mr Briggingshaw, is also primed to step into other markets, but with additional groundwork and legalities yet to be signed off, the Director was not yet ready to reveal where they are.

Speed and skill

The company is a world leader when it comes to the bespoke design, application and manufacture of centrifugal pumps and associated equipment, supplying the offshore and onshore oil and gas exploration, production and refining industries, petrochemical companies, and industrial and power makers.

The company was launched in 2002, by Alex Briggingshaw's brother, Oliver, in Suffolk to provide engineered to order solutions

and to provide support to customers around the world. The company has gone on to win orders from world-leading clients including BP, Shell, ExxonMobil and Halliburton. Amarith has marked itself out through its commitment to R&D and its ability to deliver to the highest possible spec.

Mr Briggingshaw said: "We have actively focused on R&D and looking at efficiencies. Our end users are very, very particular and we want to develop strong partnerships with them. We can only do that by thinking at least three years ahead. We are a company with the expertise and appetite to look at problems and find solutions. Customers know that's right up our street because we find bespoke engineering, it motivates us and we're good at it."

The company also trades on its ability to work at speed, delivering high-quality solutions more quickly than any competitor. Mr Briggingshaw said his team could design a tailor-made API 610 pump within a 26 to 28-week time frame. He said: "That's aggressive. That is what we sell on. We don't let people down."

Valuing people

Underneath the company's commitment to customers is its commitment to staff. The values go hand-in-hand according to Mr Briggingshaw. Amarith has an impressive staff retention rate and a mixture of experience and new blood at work. The 50-strong team has been encouraged to help establish the company's values and this, according to Mr Briggingshaw, means they all play an integral part of Amarith's vision and mission to be the market leader.