



FIFTY YEARS OF INNOVATION AND COUNTING



Kemco Systems is the process specialist when it comes to industrial water and energy solutions. The company is ever in pursuit of its mission to provide the world with the most efficient, effective, cost-competitive and enduring systems.

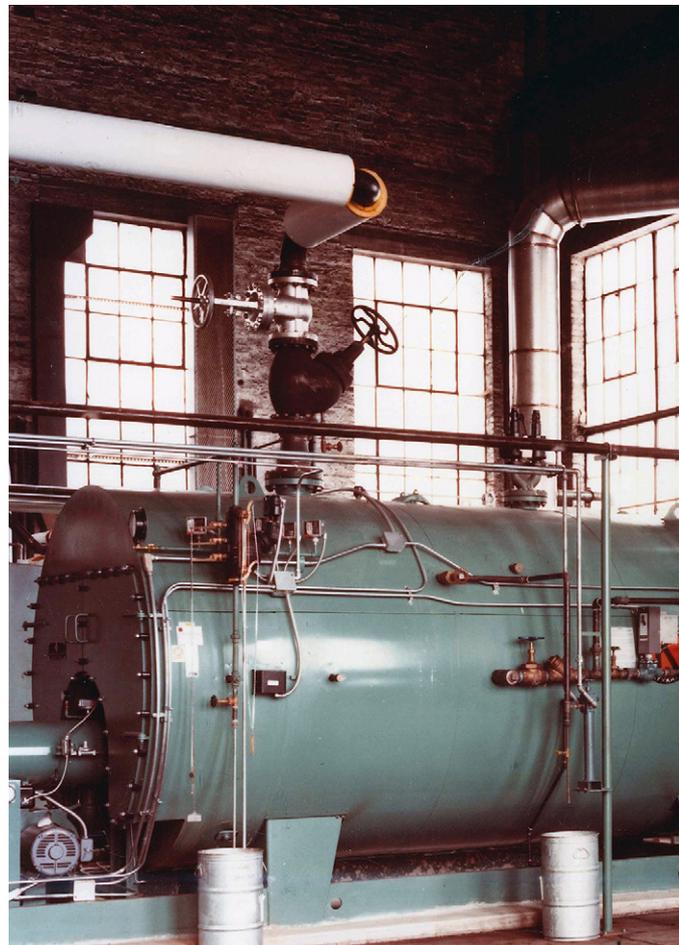
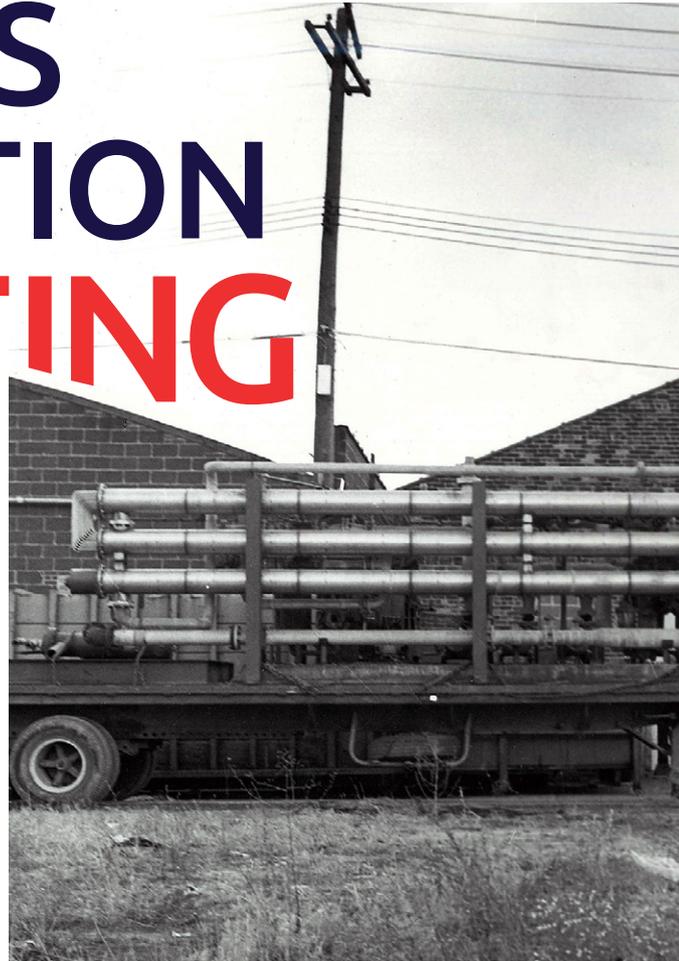
Written by Jessica Ferlaino

Established in 1969, Kemco Systems came to be as energy costs and the costs associated with sewer disposal and water rose to become significant costs of doing business. As demand for its systems grew, so too did the size and capabilities of the company. Building from basic wastewater heat recovery, Kemco's expertise expanded to include highly efficient hot water systems, stack heat recovery, and wastewater treatment and reuse solutions.

Kemco Systems has designed and installed more than 5,000 solutions for its customers around the world to date. Industrial laundry was, and remains, a primary business segment, though the company has evolved to serve food processing, textiles, concrete, and more.

While the team constantly surveys new market segments where its solutions could be relevant, Kemco Systems is cautious about jumping into new markets with new platforms. "We're averse to being generalists; we're specialists. We find niches where we can master a client's challenges and develop novel solutions specifically for them," explained Tom Vanden Heuvel, who assumed the role of President in 2016.

Kemco Systems has significantly grown over the last several years, a period during which it has undergone a transition in ownership and leadership, as well as culture. While the company is now celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, the focus is on positioning the company for the next fifty years. ▶▶







► The company designs, manufactures, installs and evaluates processes for its customers, but it also spends time innovating internal processes to optimize its own operations. As Vanden Heuvel stated, “Making it to fifty years is not a story of survival; it’s really a story of thriving, and to thrive, it takes an active effort.”

To this end, “We’ve done a good job over the last couple of years growing the business and making it more efficient,” said Vanden Heuvel, noting that while the company has grown by thirty percent, it has only needed to grow its workforce by ten percent thanks to an emphasis on continuous improvement of processes and the elimination of waste.

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To accomplish this, Kemco Systems is making some significant changes internally, adopting leaner principles in its design and production environment. From its manufacturing processes to its workflow, as well as its culture, the company is undergoing an evolution that will help it remain a premier player in the market.

What has defined Kemco’s success is its dedicated customer focus and the time and effort the team takes to understand the needs of the customer and the market, in addition to what Vanden Heuvel described as, “an overwhelming sense of curiosity.” Indeed, the team at Kemco Systems draws inspiration from everywhere.

“We’re not satisfied with the status quo,” said Vanden Heuvel. “We’re continually looking for new ways to solve customer

challenges. We spend a lot looking at emergent technology to determine what we can best apply for our customers,” not simply for the sake of being new and different but to be a true solutions provider. The company’s research and development efforts are dedicated to improving water recycling and water reuse systems, identifying, evaluating, and adopting new technology to bring the greatest value to its clients. Vanden Heuvel understands that “incremental changes can have monumental impacts.” At present, “Our wastewater solutions recycle over 20 million gallons of water a year, preventing harmful waste from discharging into our water streams.”

As he said, “We’re making some pretty substantial capital investments in retooling the organization so that we’ve got the best available technologies to drive the greatest level of efficiency and the highest level of quality back out to our clients.”

Kemco Systems has also made significant investments in its safety program, technology, and research and development. Efforts have also been undertaken to retrench internal feedback systems to engage employees in the company’s growth, evolution and success.

“We’re reengaging the employee base to bring their ideas and thoughts to life and get more of their involvement in driving the change, ultimately allowing them to build the company they want to be a part of,” Vanden Heuvel explained. As a result of these efforts, Clearwater, Florida based Kemco Systems is now regarded as a preeminent place to work.

The introduction of MyCI (My Continuous Improvement) is one method that provides employees with a platform to communicate with company leadership about tangible suggestions related to how Kemco Systems can quantifiably improve. Through this platform, employees get to quarterback their own

ideas through a system of accountability and support. "There's ownership from top to bottom," Vanden Heuvel said. "It's not a suggestion box."

Acknowledging that there is, and will continue to be, consistent demand for water and energy conservation, Kemco Systems' success will be determined by its ability to continue to address those needs. "The availability of clean water continues to diminish," said Vanden Heuvel. "The pressure is on reducing energy consumption and managing our environmental footprint and we're uniquely positioned to help our clients work through those challenges."

That was exactly the case a couple of months ago at a project in Colorado. What began as a request for equipment resulted in Kemco Systems delivering a full turnkey design-build mechanical room.

"They were forced to relocate their facility, and as a result, they basically had to build a new operation and they reached out to us," Vanden Heuvel explained. "We understood that they had some much bigger and broader challenges, and as the scope of the project continued to evolve, we actually took on the role of lead mechanical contractor."

Projects like this demonstrate Kemco Systems' willingness to dig deep to deliver unique, innovative solutions that are greatly impactful for its customers and the natural environment. As Vanden Heuvel stated, "It's nice to be in a business that's focused on conservation and helping to optimize the use of water and electricity."

When asked what his goals for Kemco Systems are, Vanden Heuvel responded, "It's been a really good fifty years but I think the next fifty are going to be better. We have so much growth opportunity ahead of us," as challenging regulatory environments and the increasing costs of utilities will enable Kemco Systems to remain ever-relevant.

"We help customers reduce those costs and improve reliability but we're also bringing a lot of technology to the table, so I see nothing but really good things for where Kemco can go," Vanden Heuvel shared. "We've got a great story to tell. We've got a great pedigree, a phenomenal track record and we just need to continue to tell the story while being creative and innovative in how we extend our product line and our service offerings." This approach will surely define the next fifty years of growth, success and innovation at Kemco Systems. ■





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