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By KITTY McCONNELL FRENCH
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Innovation

Flow Without Ebb

Columbus-based industrial distributor is making its mark among global manufacturers.

The future looks bright to Tom Cox, CEO of FCX Performance. Bright, as in \$12 billion domestic growth potential within the diverse commercial manufacturing industries his process flow control company serves.

“We’re focused on continuing to add value for our customers and to grow our business, so we have a long runway for growth,” Cox says. FCX ranks among the world’s 50 largest industrial distributors, in terms of sales, by trade publication *Industrial Distribution*.

A diversified client base has kept FCX from experiencing the market



Tom Cox

FCX Performance

3000 E. 14th Ave., Columbus 43219
fcxperformance.com

ABOUT: A process flow control company and industrial distributor that stocks, assembles, services and repairs high-tech valves, pumps and other instruments used in process operations in a variety of industries.

CEO: Tom Cox

FOUNDED: 1984

EMPLOYEES: 800 (200+ in Ohio, including 70 in Columbus)

2016 REVENUE: \$350 million

downturns that otherwise would lead to layoffs or facility closures. For example, FCX was insulated from the hit the oil and gas industry has taken over the last few years.

“I am so proud to tell you that we did not lay off one single person in the oil and gas downturn,” Cox says. “We actually were able to hire, in 2016, 10 more salespeople and 25 more service technicians, and it’s because we’re so well-diversified. That’s the way we’re going to continue to build the business.”

As the company grows, that means more high-skilled FCX jobs in Columbus. Founded as Simco Controls in 1984 by Ohio State University alum-

nus and FCX board member Charles “Charlie” Simon, FCX benefits from maintaining its headquarters in the Columbus region.

“It’s a great place to be able to recruit all types of talent, from technical sales people to service technicians to executives. People want to relocate here,” Cox says. Nearly 10 percent of the company’s national workforce is based in Columbus.

Some of the city’s biggest organizations are FCX clients, including Abbott Laboratories, OSU, the city of Columbus and Anheuser-Busch InBev. FCX customers produce everything “from paper goods to soda pop, medication, the gas we put in our

cars, water to our houses and offices, even the power that we use to charge all our devices,” Cox says.

To produce the goods we use every day, manufacturers have to control the flow of liquids, gases and steam in their production plants, Cox explains. “That’s where we come in.”

A longstanding acquisition/growth strategy positioned FCX as a one-stop shop for industries’ flow-control needs. FCX has acquired 20 companies in its 30-plus years, four of which have occurred since Cox became CEO in 2015.

“We look for companies that, by becoming part of FCX, will allow us to create more value for our customers so that we can grow more, so that one-plus-one is going to equal four,” Cox says. FCX wants companies it acquires to maintain their unique identities: their names, their employees, their service niches.

“I want them to maintain and build whatever their secret sauce was that allowed them to grow,” he says. “We don’t want to FCX-ize them.”

With so many industrial components in their offerings, FCX must keep its workforce trained on a vast range of

products and technologies and their applications. FCX University, an in-house training program for FCX employees and clients, launched in 2010.

Technical expertise is just one element of what makes FCX a leader in its industry. Central Ohio’s logistical infrastructure allows FCX to maintain a strong client base among Midwestern manufacturers and municipal operations, though the company operates 45 facilities in 38 states.

One of FCX’s strengths is the ability to provide same-day shipping—even same-day delivery—of critical process control parts to manufacturers in need. Inventory distribution centers across

“We look for companies that ... will allow us to create more value for our customers ... so that one plus one is going to equal four.”

TOM COX, FCX Performance CEO

the US means FCX clients can make repairs and get their production operations back online quickly after a valve or instrumentation malfunction.

Cox received an email from one such client over the summer, which he reads aloud to illustrate the impact FCX’s service capabilities have on its clients’ operations. “Thank you for all you did Saturday on finding the actuator, positioner and bracket, and getting it to us on the same day,” wrote the customer, whom Cox would not identify because of confidentiality concerns. “It saved us about a half-million dollars in product.”

Cox is proud to lead FCX’s technicians, salespeople and all the employees at the heart of the company. “I watch our folks; they crawl around in the most remote, dirtiest, sometimes most dangerous areas of a customer’s plant.

“I’m proud of what we’ve built, but I’m even more excited about what the future has for us in Columbus and across the country,” he says.

Kitty McConnell French is a freelance writer.

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