

Guest Comment April 2018



Larry C. Kerr, Vice President/General Manager Petroleum and Industrial Pumps – Gardner Denver

The last few years have been some of the most innovative and transformative that the oil and gas industry has seen. The required drive to improve efficiency has generated transformational technologies and services allowing operators to drill longer laterals at higher pressures and temperatures. Exiting the tremendous downturn, as oil prices increased most companies have improved revenues and profit margins. We can enthusiastically say our industry evolved during the downturn. Trends like ‘The Great Crew Change’ also began taking place. These two movements, innovation and the changing workforce, are the main driving force behind today’s growing focus - digitisation. Digitisation is fast becoming a tremendous asset for our industry, affording us the opportunity to predict failures, improve maintenance and increase equipment efficiency. Digitisation is also changing the way we teach and train the newest generation in the oilfield. While this is an historic trend, it also reinforces foundational concepts which should never be eliminated no matter how much we evolve. A few examples, include:

Consistent inspection/maintenance programmes are critical.

Digital monitoring does not extend us a ‘hall pass’ to forego the requirement of trained experts, well defined processes and structured programmes. Electronics cannot replace our reliance on fundamental business practices. While electronic technology provides an analytical advantage, it will never supplant the importance of effective processes, maintenance programmes, training, knowledge and field experience. People, processes and programmes will always take centre stage to ensure success. People innovate, design and implement. Processes control performance. Programmes ensure standard work. Technology enhances and accelerates our ability to standardise, predict, monitor and analyse performance. Digital technology helps us go faster, enables achievement of new records and supports breakthrough innovation. People, processes and programmes deliver results.

New buyers learn differently, so we must sell differently.

In years past, products were sold based on relationships, brand loyalty and service excellence. Investing time with clients required face to face meetings. Today, some suggest technology is minimising relationships, commoditising products and trivialising service. A new generation of technology savvy buyers are now playing an integral role in purchasing decisions. While the ‘click of the button’ may suggest the buying process has been dehumanised, relationships, brand reputation and service level still matter. We simply have to connect, educate and serve differently than we did in the past. We must meet these new buyers where they reside – whether that’s through social media groups and platforms like LinkedIn, or online training courses. The burden of educating the next generation of the oilfield falls on our shoulders – and there’s no single way to teach, mentor, lead and serve.

Digital tools do not take the place of hands-on learning.

If you’ve taken a shop class or any sort of hands-on training course, you know the best way to learn is by applying all of your knowledge and training in the field. Similar to a doctor with years of residency, simulation, online learning or traditional coursework will only take you so far. Hands on training, ‘try before you buy’ and first-hand experience create the best muscle memory for doing it right the first time.

It is our joint responsibility to train and educate one another on industry best practices. The oilfield continues to evolve in a positive manner, but trends will never replace a solid work ethic and teamwork to make sure a job is done right. We should always work hard to maintain an exceptional hands-on skillset and the relationships that we cultivate along the way. ■

About the author

Larry Kerr is a Senior Management leader with 33 years of proven experience in building and leading successful global organisations. He is currently responsible for overall leadership and general management of Gardner Denver’s Petroleum and Industrial Pump business. He has full P&L responsibility for drilling pumps, stimulation pumps and water jetting pumps. Operations include three manufacturing plants and seven aftermarket sales/repair centres. He reports directly to the President and CEO of Gardner Denver Inc. Primary markets served include oil & gas, marine and general industrial. Market channels include a combination of direct and distribution.

Prior positions include Director at Sirius Solutions, Director of Manufacturing, Six Sigma Master Black Belt & Black Belt; Director of Supply Chain and Aftermarket Services Manager at Cameron International.

Mr. Kerr earned a B.S. in Industrial Management Technology from Southeastern Louisiana University and an MBA from University of Texas. Mr. Kerr’s various achievements and professional development include: Petroleum Equipment Services Association (PESA) Advisory Board and Member; New Member Committee; International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADA); Instructor for Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and Green Belt Training; Volunteer Leader for Boy Scouts of America and Houston Marathon 2006 & 2008.