

Turning Risk Into Reward

MAXFIELD, INC., MAKES GREAT STRIDES IN THE WESTERN CANADIAN COMPRESSED-GAS MARKET
THANKS TO THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF BLACKMER® PUMP AND COMPRESSOR TECHNOLOGY

By Kent Crawford



MaXfield was founded in 2002 and has experienced phenomenal growth. In fact, the Alberta, Canada-based company expects to reach \$70 million in revenue in 2012.

We've all had that job where, at one point, it becomes apparent that if you were in charge you could improve the company's performance. That was the thinking of a group of entrepreneurs who founded MaXfield, Inc., in 2002 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. MaXfield, Inc., is a designer, fabricator, packager and servicer of a wide range of pressure vessels, structural skids and compressed-gas transport units for use in the Western Canadian transport, oil-and-gas, agricultural, anhydrous ammonia (NH₃) and propane-distribution markets.

The full story of MaXfield stretches back to the early 1960s and the Western Rock Bit Co., Ltd., a fabricating company for the oil-and-gas exploration industry. After a time, Western Rock Bit was bought out by the RNG Group (which would later be known as RNG ProTech), but when RNG began experiencing some financial difficulties, three of the company's managers – who all had roots reaching back to the Western Rock Bit days of the 1970s – decided to take the risk and pool their resources in order to purchase the company, which they renamed MaXfield, Inc.

The success MaXfield has experienced in the ensuing nine years has been nothing short of a true testament

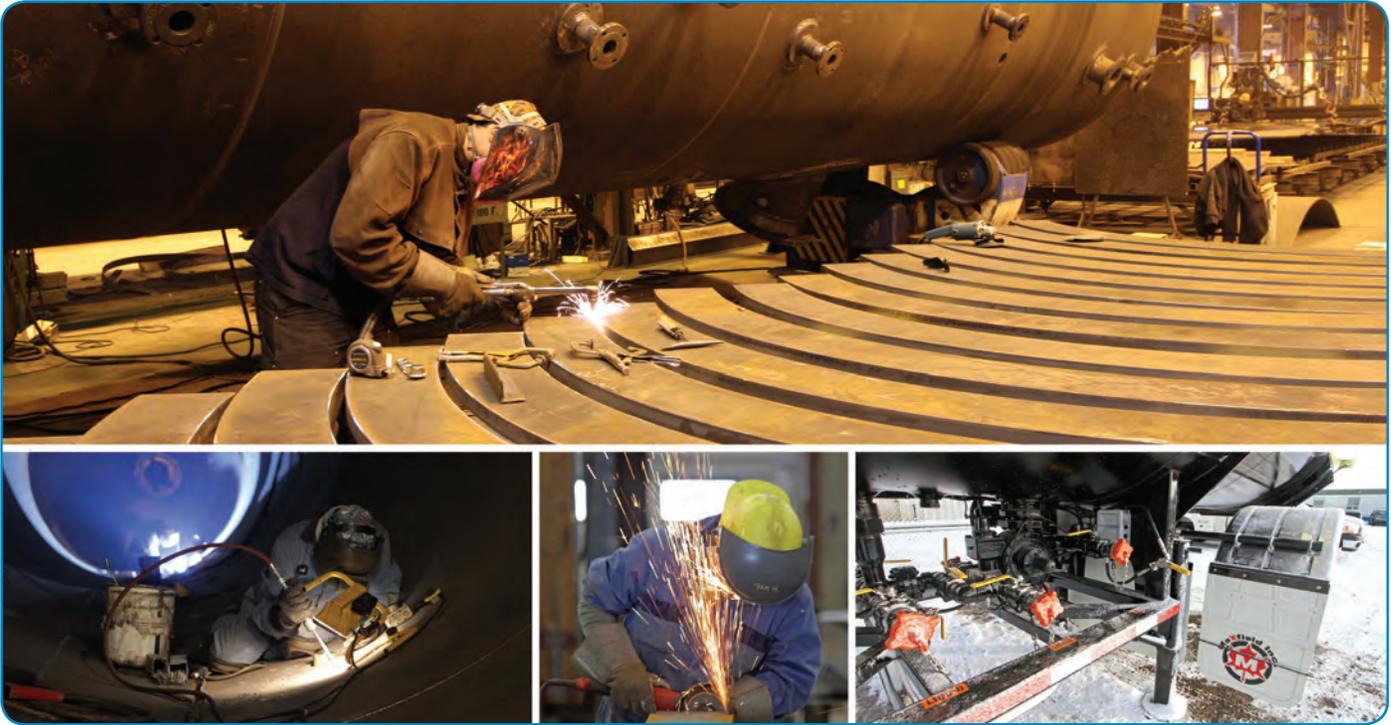
to their foresight. MaXfield started with 27 employees who manufactured pressure vessels and compressed-gas transport units at its 60,000-square-foot Crossfield, Alberta manufacturing plant, located just north of the company headquarters in Calgary. Since then, the Crossfield facility has been expanded to 114,000 square feet of plant and office space, while satellite locations have been opened in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and Brandon, Manitoba.

Since 2002, the number of MaXfield's employees has also grown from 27 to 250 and, most important, annual sales revenues have experienced a similarly eye-opening increase.

"We went from \$7 million in sales that first year to in excess of \$70 million in our 2012 budget," said Tony Giasson, one of those Western Rock Bit veterans and currently MaXfield's President and COO. "That's pretty phenomenal growth."

Forward Thinking

Anyone can dream of the type of growth that MaXfield has experienced in less than a decade, but it takes a group of people possessing the proper insight and ideas, and the wherewithal to constantly strive to move forward, to



MaXfield, Inc., offers a full range of design, fabrication, packaging and servicing options for a wide array of pressure vessels, structural skids and compressed-gas transport units for use in various markets.

actually make it happen. It also can take some out-of-the-box thinking coupled with loyalty to channel partners that have proven their worth over time.

One of MaXfield’s many innovative ideas came in the area of equipment supply.

“We said, ‘Wouldn’t it be great to have a parts division?’” Giasson explained. “So, in 2002 we helped a group of managers start Maxquip and a couple of years ago, we actually sold Maxquip to the individuals who helped start the company. They’re a preferred vendor at this point for the type of equipment that we use.”

Since its founding, Maxquip, which is also headquartered in Calgary, has opened satellite offices and distribution facilities across Canada in Surry, British Columbia; Edmonton, Alberta; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Montreal, Quebec on the way to becoming a distributor known for the great selection of compressed-gas parts, components and integrated systems that it supplies to Canada’s propane, agriculture and oil-and-gas industries.

As such, Maxquip is one of the leading distributors of positive displacement sliding vane pump and reciprocating gas compressor technology from Blackmer®, Grand Rapids, MI, USA, which is a name that is very familiar to MaXfield.

“Tony has been using Blackmers for a very, very long time – 30-plus years – so he is very familiar with the equipment,”

said Cameron Stewart, President of Maxquip, which has been a Blackmer pump and compressor distributor since 2002. “MaXfield is probably our No. 1 Blackmer customer in terms of volume. The MaXfield guys are very well-trained on the Blackmer product line and they have the capability to install, rebuild and service the pumps.”

Answering The Call

Basically, you can’t look at a pressure vessel, storage tank, bobtail, mobile skid or compressed-gas transport vehicle that MaXfield has fabricated since its founding without noticing the presence of some type of Blackmer pump or compressor equipment.

“If you look at Maxquip and the volume of sales they have, I know that as we’ve grown we use more and more Blackmer pumps and compressors,” said Giasson. “I’d say we have more than 1,000 Blackmer pumps in the field right now, for sure.”

That’s because MaXfield’s manufacturing capabilities are wide and varied. They can build storage tanks for propane, NH₃ and carbon dioxide applications, while also being able to fabricate custom storage vessels for use in oil-sands exploration and recovery activities. Pressure vessels can also be put on wheels for transports, while skids can be outfitted with pump and compressor components for mobile-transfer and recovery applications.

“We’ll build the storage vessel, then put the pump packages on that, and we’ll build transport vessels, put wheels on them and put Blackmer pumps on those, as well,” said Giasson. “In some cases, we build the storage vessel, the transport vehicle for delivery and the smaller storage tanks that retail customers use. In the case of liquids that get stripped off in the refining process, we can take those liquids and transport them to a central storage area before they are moved along for further refinement.”

All along the way, more often than not, Blackmer 3-inch or 4-inch LGL Series Sliding Vane Pumps are helping to expedite the transfer process. The LGL pumps perfectly meet MaXfield’s compressed-gas-handling needs because they have been designed for maximum performance and reliability under the most severe service conditions. They feature a cavitation-suppression liner that reduces the noise, vibration and wear that can be caused by entrained vapors and have replaceable casing liners and end discs that allow the pumping chamber to be rebuilt to factory-new condition. They have excellent self-priming and dry-run capabilities, and a symmetrical bearing support that ensures even loading and wear for long life. A relief valve protects the pump against excessive pressures and the external ball bearings are isolated from the pumpage by mechanical seals to maximize bearing life and minimize contamination



Tony Giasson next to one of the Blackmer HXL Series pumps ready to be installed on a new CO₂ transfer skid.

risk. If the pump vanes wear, they can be replaced without needing to remove the pump from the piping system, which saves money and equipment downtime.

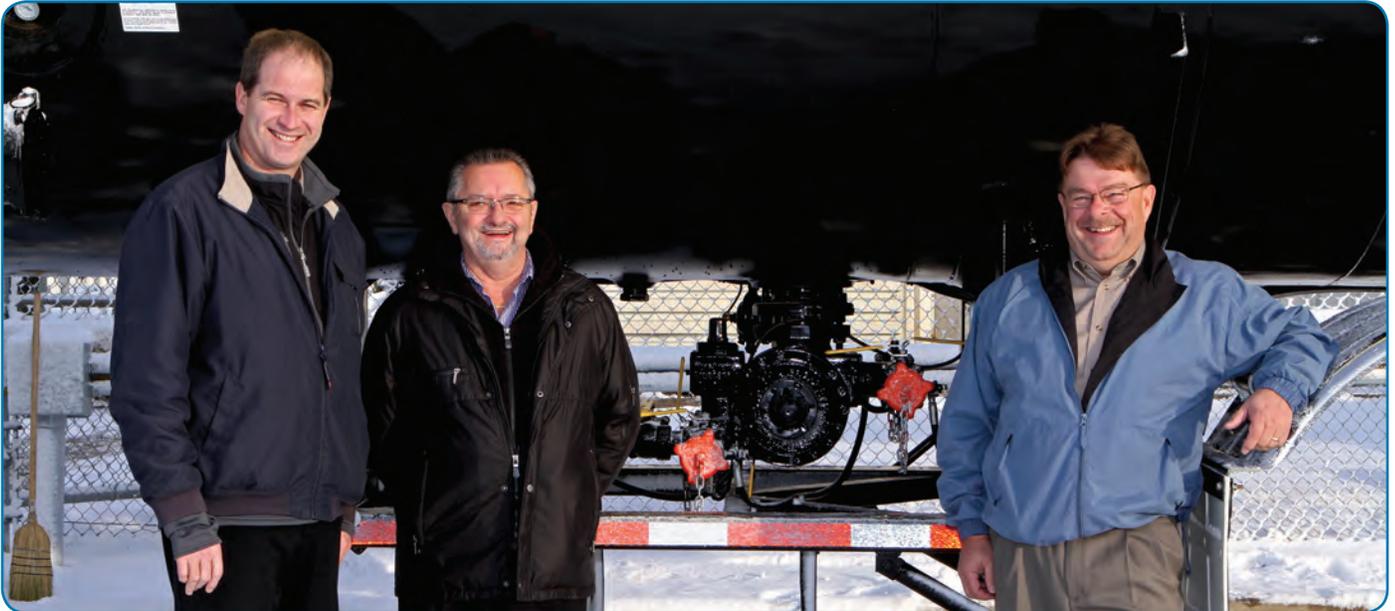
“I’m really impressed with Blackmer,” said Giasson. “We have regulations in Canada for NH₃ delivery units that require the elimination of the vapor line. Because of that, the differential pressure requirement is a little higher than it is for a normal pump. Working with Maxquip and the Blackmer folks, they were able to design a pump with a liner that gives us the capability of going to an extra 10 to 15 pounds of differential pressure. Also, the Blackmer pump is such a simple design, easy to fix, and easy to replace the bearings and liners and rotors and vanes. The thing

that’s most impressive is that you can take it apart and rebuild it right on the trailer or on-site. They’re also very, very reliable. Unless you get stupid and run it too fast or run it dry for an extended period, they last a very long time. We have pumps that have been performing flawlessly for 10-plus years.”

On the compressor side, MaXfield relies on Blackmer’s LB Series Reciprocating Gas Compressors, specifically the LB361 and LB601 models. LB Series compressors feature a ductile-iron head that is stronger and more resistant to thermal shock and corrosion than ordinary cast iron, resulting in long-life reliability. Leak-free operation is ensured by the presence of O-rings, instead of



Blackmer pumps and compressors are the preferred choice for nearly all of MaXfield’s designs.



(Left to right) Cameron Stewart, President of Maxquip; Kent Crawford, Regional Manager for Blackmer; and Tony Giasson, President and COO of MaXfield. Maxquip has been a Blackmer distributor since 2002 and supplier to MaXfield since its inception.

gaskets, that are located between the cylinder and head. Case-hardened steel valves and stainless-steel discs and springs are easily removed without having to disturb the piping. The suction valve can be configured as either an input or discharge valve, which simplifies the stocking of spare parts.

“The Blackmer compressors have a very, very simple design and are extremely easy to maintain. Their reliability is simply unmatched,” said Giasson. “They are the best compressor we’ve seen for handling LP gas and NH₃.”

Conclusion

The world is rife with stories about successful companies that came about because a few individuals were smart and brave enough to take a risk and subsequently turn their dreams into a profitable entity. After less than a decade in business, MaXfield, Inc., has become one of those enviable success stories. In addition to the gumption needed to take a calculated risk, MaXfield also increased the chances of its success by partnering with companies it knew it could rely upon. One of those was Blackmer, which has contributed its tried-and-true pump and compressor technology to MaXfield’s success. MaXfield also benefits from Blackmer’s

ability and willingness to meet the individual needs of its clients.

“Blackmer listened to us and worked with Maxquip to design pumps and compressors that met our specific needs,” said Giasson. “If we have an application where we’re not sure what we need or how it’s going to work, the Blackmer technical people are very easy to talk to as far as us giving them the parameters for a job and them coming back with exactly what we need. They have bent over backwards to make sure we get looked after.”

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