

BY MARY JO MARTIN
Editorial Director

Earlier this summer, I had an opportunity to visit the Watts Water Technologies corporate headquarters in North Andover, Mass., for a tour of the fa-

President-Americas a year ago.

Imagine my delight when I walked into her office, and discovered that she has the same high-heeled pump tape dispenser on her desk as I do — not a sight I typically see as I travel around this still-often-male-

dominated industry. Suellen shared that she specifically chose certain items to display in her office as a reminder of the route she has taken along her career journey. The tape dispenser represents her years as President of pump manufacturer Milton Roy Company.

While Suellen was new to the Watts Water organization when she took on her role, she has a volume of experience from a career in manufacturing. She joined Watts Water at a particularly historical — and pivotal — time for the company. Marking its 140th

values that brought them to this point, Watts Water has unveiled new initiatives and product development that they believe will help set the course for the future. (See sidebar on page 132 to learn more about Watts Water's incredible history.)

A company doesn't reach such a milestone without pursuing operational excellence at every level of its business. Among some of these efforts over the years have been:

- A Continuous Improvement Operating System that includes Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma
- Cross-functional teams on the plant floor to reduce lead times and improve productivity
- Reinvesting in equipment and engineering to improve manufacturing efficiencies
- Rigorous design protocol with R&D teams that includes prototyping, advanced testing, quality control processes and more.

Watts Water also took a leading position in recent years leading up to the January 2014 implementation of national lead free legislation. They spent a great deal of time educating customers (especially wholesalers and plumbing contractors) about the finer points of the law, and how

Torregrosa: It wasn't part of the original plan. As a young girl, there weren't nearly as many women in the workforce, and those that were typically chose things like nursing or teaching. I actually wanted to be a bank teller. But then while I was in high school, I worked at a pancake restaurant in a tourist town, and I

140 years of innovation

was really inspired by watching the owner. So I decided that I wanted to run a business.

I started as an engineering major in college, and had an opportunity to work on some of the submarines and aircraft carriers at the Newport News [Va.] Shipyard. It was fascinating, but through the process, I figured out I didn't want to be an engineer. So I switched my major to finance, and during my last summer of college, was back on an aircraft carrier — this time expediting parts. It taught me all about navigating red tape and roadblocks to actually get things done.

MJM: Along the way, what have



Suellen Torregrosa, Watts Water Technologies' President-Americas.

New leadership, initiatives set to drive growth at Watts Water

city, to get some insight into what is at the heart of this venerable global manufacturer, and to meet with Suellen Torregrosa, who was named

anniversary this year, the nearly \$1.5-billion company is a leader in the global water industry. And while they continue to embrace the core

to prepare for the transition. Illustrative of that investment: Watts opened a new, dedicated lead free foundry in New Hampshire. (To read a feature on this state-of-the-art facility, refer back to *The Wholesaler*, July 2013, page 134.)

Recently, Watts Water unveiled an initiative called "One Watts Water" that they believe will help take the company to even greater heights in the future. I talked about all of this — and much more — with Suellen Torregrosa, along with Director of Strategic Partnerships Stephanie Ewing, and Director of Marketing Greg Gyorda during our visit.

MJM: Suellen, how did you get into an industrial manufacturing career path — a rather unconventional route for women when you were starting out?

"I'm so impressed with the talent and the passion among the team at Watts. It motivates me to think about how each product we offer adds value to a customer — and what we need to do to continue offering the best value and service on the market."

— Suellen Torregrosa

been some of the roles you've held that have best prepared you for this position as President-Americas of Watts Water?

Torregrosa: When I graduated, the job market was terrible, and I ended up working for a marketing consulting firm. It turned out to be a great way to start my career because I learned all about market re-

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140 Years of Innovation
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Innovative Water Solutions
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search and statistics.

About a year and a half later, I accepted a job doing customer satisfaction surveys with Falk Corporation, which manufactured gearboxes and couplings. It got my foot in the door. As I proved myself, they promoted me to positions with greater responsibilities, which over the next 12 years gave me an opportunity to learn the entire business. I spent time in Marketing Services doing an-

alytics and really got to know the ins and outs of that department. Then I started working with customer service to learn how they operated. It clicked with me that they were doing a number of things manually that instead could be highly automated. So I started working on projects to improve customer service efficiency.

That led to an opportunity to run the customer service department, and later to manage their distribu-

learn a lot about electronics, software, firmware and more. It was a great experience, but in my heart I was missing the industrial side. I've been in the deepest coal mine in the U.S. and on top of massive grain elevators; those kinds of applications, critical to our everyday lives, are what most excite me.

So when Sundstrand was acquired by United Technologies, I was thrilled to get a call to be Vice-President of another of their

things worked. And my boss at Milton Roy taught me how to listen to people — what they're telling you as well as what they're not saying. He had a real talent for getting people to open up about what they were really thinking. That's critical in dealing with employees, peers and customers. No one can get up the ladder without some helping hands, and I'm grateful to those who took the time to share their wisdom with me.

MJM: *What was it about Watts Water that attracted you at this stage of your career?*

Torregrosa: First of all, it has a great reputation and great brands. I also was impressed by the breadth and depth of high-quality products Watts Water offers. When I compared the company to what I had experienced in my previous roles, I realized right away that it would be an ideal fit for me. I'm so impressed with the talent and the passion among the teams. It motivates me to think about how each product we offer adds value to a customer — and what we need to do to continue offering the best value and service on the market.

MJM: *What were some of the initial challenges you wanted to tackle?*

Torregrosa: The first thing was for me to really understand the business, the challenges, the customers and the employees. So I spent the first six months getting a baseline. That allowed me to narrow my focus to a couple of things I thought were most important. One was engaging the workforce. We've been looking at ways to really engage people and get their input on improving the business. We've got almost 2,200 people in the U.S. and 6,000 worldwide, so if we can encourage the involvement of people every day to help us think about how to improve the business, that's very powerful.

MJM: *And you mentioned understanding the customers as well?*

Torregrosa: I needed to know what customers are looking for and how we can support them, so I spent a lot of time on the road visiting wholesalers and contractors. Having personal communications with our customers is the only way for me to fully understand them and get their pulse.

The world is changing and the way people want to do business is evolving. So how do we take all those ways to communicate and provide the right information, in a
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The Evolution of Watts

There really was a Mr. Watts behind the rather humble start of this now 140-year-old legendary global manufacturer. After immigrating to America and settling in Massachusetts as a teenager in 1857, Joseph E. Watts pursued his dream of becoming a machinist. In his mid-30s, he set up an independent machine shop — which he called Watts Regulator Company — to supply machinery parts and fittings to the local textile mills. He was extremely inventive and received patents for his steam and water pressure regulators that helped ensure the safe operation of water heaters and boilers.



Joseph E. Watts

Burchard E. Horne and two others acquired Watts Regulator in 1918, and within a year, he bought out his partners to form a family owned and operated business. In the late 1920s, Watts Regulator developed the patented temperature and pressure relief valve — which became central to the company's success.

By the mid-1930s, Burchard's son, George, came on board to head up sales and marketing. He spent a lot of time on the road building the Watts brand. When his father died unexpectedly in 1951, George Horne took over day-to-day control of Watts. Under this fresh perspective and management team, the company changed, grew and expanded. A few years later, as they opened a new manufacturing plant in Franklin, N.H., George's son

Tim Horne entered the business.

The next two decades saw the company expand its domestic presence while entering the international market — opening plants in Canada and the United Kingdom. They also entered the rather new backflow prevention market and the waterworks industry, which have proved to be some of the company's most successful lines.

As George Horne eased out of the business, Tim became President in 1976 and then added the CEO role in 1978. Under his leadership and vision to expand Watts through the developing of entirely new product lines, the company grew from \$39.5 million in 1978 to \$100 million in 1984. It was his idea to take the company public in 1986 as a method of raising investment capital and also to explore new acquisitions. From 1985 to 1995, Watts acquired 28 companies and product lines including some overseas.

Tim retired as CEO in 2002 after a remarkable 43-year tenure but remains a consultant and director emeritus. He still maintains an office at the corporate headquarters and is held in high — and fond — regard by today's Watts Water team.

In the ensuing years, Patrick O'Keefe succeeded Tim as CEO and the company's name was changed to Watts



Water Technologies to reflect its focus on water-related solutions. Under his leadership, Watts Water continued its record of growth, acquiring 23 companies and increasing revenues from \$615 million in 2002 to more than \$1.2 billion in 2010.

When Pat left the company in 2011, David Coghlan, the company's Chief Operating Officer, was promoted to CEO and President. David, a former Vice President of Trane Inc. with broad international experience, joined Watts Water in 2008. As Watts Water's CEO, he put in place the company's strategy (Growth, Operational Excellence, and One Watts Water). He also helped the company lead the way to lead free in the U.S., to strengthen its business in EMEA, and expand its presence in growth markets.



Burchard E. Horne

David left in early 2014, and in May, Robert J. Pagano, Jr., formerly Senior Vice President of ITT Corporation and President, ITT Industrial Process, was appointed President and CEO. Under Bob's leadership, ITT's Industrial Process segment grew its revenues from \$719 million in 2009 to \$1.1 billion in 2013 and became a leader in the global energy market. Bob had continued his track record of growing businesses through strong customer focus, new product development, and strategic acquisitions. 🌐



Stephanie Ewing, Watts' Director of Strategic Partnerships.

tion strategy. At the time, chain distributors were buying up small independents to build their base. The company was restructured into business units, and I was put in charge of one of them, which meant responsibility for four product lines, engineers, shipping, machining and assembly. Later, when the company went back to a functional structure, I spent time managing several of their departments, including engineering, customer service and distribution.

Thinking it was time for a change, I switched gears in 2002 from an industrial environment to aerospace when I accepted a position as General Manager of Dynamic Controls with Hamilton Sundstrand. I got to

subsidaries — Milton Roy Company, where I eventually became President. They produce metering pumps and related equipment at plants in the U.S., Europe, Asia and India. I really enjoyed that role, until they put us up for sale. I spent about a year helping lead the company through that transition, a process that also taught me a lot.

MJM: *What are some of the key lessons you've learned on your way up the ladder?*

Torregrosa: I've had some great managers and mentors during my career. In particular, I had a great IT manager at Falk who spent hours teaching me the business and how

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clear and concise way, in the manner a customer wants, and in the format they need?

We're all bombarded with so much information, and there are so many different ways to present



Greg Gyorda, Watts' Director of Marketing.

and share it. I spend a lot of time thinking about how to do that most effectively. You can publish all the material you want, but if people can't find it or don't understand it, what good is it? We've got to leverage all the tools we have at our disposal in today's world. The capabilities we have to provide information to customers on any product we offer are phenomenal. The key is figuring out how to best provide it, and the right amount so that it's enough without overloading them. If you look at how wholesalers are evolving their service to customers with a web presence in addition to their storefront, you'll see it really changes the game.

MJM: What are some of the ways you're gathering this information?

Torregrosa: We are in the process of doing a customer satisfaction survey with the wholesale channel. That should provide us with a lot of solid information we can build on.

We go to market through independent manufacturers' reps, and have built very close relationships with them. We value their feedback and opinions, because they interact with customers on a daily basis — something that we at corporate cannot do. They provide us with tremendous market intelligence based on what they are hearing from wholesalers and mechanical contractors.

MJM: Stephanie, you're constantly in touch with customers. Describe the feedback you've been getting on their experiences with Watts Water?

Ewing: Our customers say they like to do business with Watts Water because we are a true partner. It is a given that we provide a quality product that generates market demand, but what differentiates us is that we also invest heavily in

time, and through the years customers have kept my name on file and at times will hunt me down if they need something. I think that says a lot. Customers who work with me know that no matter how much time passes, where I am, or what title I have, I am there for them and will help them when they need it.

MJM: That does say a lot! So from your perspective, just how important

Watts Water Technologies

are the personal relationships in this industry when it comes to driving business?

Ewing: From my perspective, personal relationships are critical. It is still very much a people business. I



Components await assembly into finished products. As Suellen Torregrosa says, "We believe it is very important for us to support the customer through a shorter supply chain — having our product made here in the U.S. — and being able to effectively control the materials used in the process."

the experience with the customer previous to the sale and long afterwards. We've helped customers solve problems and provided solutions for 140 years. Over that period of time, we've broadened our space so that there are always more things we can offer them.

I've been in the business a long

don't think you can rely on just that — but investing in relationships is what will support long-term partnerships. We have aligned a great team that is focused and sincere. Our team is spending time with customers and listening to them. And they follow up and follow through on their commitments. We also have a leadership team that has a committed focus on customers for the long-term.

MJM: Greg, I've heard a lot of references today to "One Watts Water." Tell me more about that?

Gyorda: We recently charted a new course for Watts Water; it's a strategy called One Watts Water that has great potential for us. With "One Watts Water," we're starting to leverage the collective power of all our companies and brands by providing comprehensive product packages and system solutions to our customers to become a one-

stop shop for them. It's all about enhancing our relationships with customers to ultimately make Watts Water the easiest company to do business with.

In essence, we offer single-source responsibility for many facets of home, business and institutional product quality, compatibility and sourcing. There is no competitor of ours that offers the breadth of plumbing products and water-based solutions that Watts Water

does. It's really exciting to understand that Watts Water has the capability to capture rain from the sky through our rainwater harvesting solutions then control the flow of that water throughout a building or home where it can be used for any application from drinking and cooking to heating and bathing, as long as it has been filtered through one of our water filtration systems. And finally, we can ensure it drains safely out of the building after use. Pretty awesome.

What it really comes down to is building a resource that appeals chiefly to installing contractors and commercial system specifiers. If we

**"Our customers say they like to do business with Watts Water because we are a true partner....We've helped customers solve problems and provided solutions for 140 years."
— Stephanie Ewing**

can make it possible — and more appealing — for them to buy more Watts Water products and solutions by linking all of our companies together and presenting them to our customers as a single entity, everyone wins.

MJM: We visited your new lead free foundry in New Hampshire last year just prior to its opening. How has making that investment benefited the company overall?

Torregrosa: We believed it was very important for us to support the customer through a shorter supply chain — having our product made here in the U.S. — and being able to effectively control the materials used in the process. Watts Water looks at that investment as a com-
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Today's Watts Water Technologies

In total the Watts Water Technologies organization offers a wide range of world-class water-related solutions:

- **Plumbing & Flow Control Solutions** — Products that facilitate efficient water conveyance and control for commercial, residential, and industrial applications.
- **Water Quality & Conditioning Solutions** — Industry-leading solutions for filtering, conditioning, and testing water.
- **Water Reuse & Drainage** — Helping facilitate the management, removal & reuse of storm and wastewater.
- **HVAC Systems & Controls** — A full suite of superior solutions designed to maximize occupant comfort and energy efficiency.
- **Municipal Waterworks** — High-quality solutions for protecting, monitoring, and controlling potable and non-potable water supplies.

The company's world-class manufacturing facilities are spread throughout North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia-Pacific, and many more are ISO 9001 certified. 🌐

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petitive advantage for us and our customers. We love to bring customers for tours to show them the

it's been the single most important driver of Watts' leadership position for more than a century. We've consistently pioneered many of

that's devoted so much time and talent to making a lasting impact in the industry it serves.

MJM: *I couldn't help but notice as we walked around the headquarters today how many people you pointed out who have been here for a lot of years. What is it that makes folks so loyal to and passionate about Watts Water?*

Gyorda: The company has a

Lead Free Foundry. This group was happy and inspired and delighted to be there, proud of the fact that they've enjoyed so many years together, and also at seeing the huge investment Watts Water has made in expanding and improving the facility there. And I look at my own career here — now at 26 years!

I'm convinced that, throughout the Watts Water organization, associates in management and on the factory floor share a well-rooted belief in the company, its future, and their role in it. Many of these long-term associates have provided continuity through many of the changes we've seen. The company's success is due to the associates who work here and believe in the company.

And, perhaps most importantly, there's a real sense of the common cause. Together, we make a very real and positive impact in the health of the company, our own futures, in the market and ultimately in the homes and businesses where our products are installed. We take a lot of pride in that.

MJM: *Stephanie, you have a little different perspective, having come to Watts Water through the acquisition of Dormont. What in your mind makes Watts Water so special?*

Ewing: The Watts legacy has lived on and evolved through many transitions over 140 years — but its people are what I believe has made the company value equation live on and the brands so special. We have a very talented team and have brought

Watts Water Technologies

facility because we believe it does help us differentiate ourselves. The foundry is a world-class operation, and when a customer can see what goes into making the Watts Water lead free products, it gives them an extra level of assurance.

MJM: *Stephanie, you played a very visible role during that transition. Can you talk about your perspective on what those efforts brought to Watts?*

Ewing: Watts Water has received industry goodwill. In my opinion, goodwill pays dividends beyond a month, a quarter or a year. This industry will remember our partnership during what was a time of great complexity and ambiguity. We took responsibility as a leader and held many hands through the difficulties of the lead-free transition.

MJM: *What is behind Watts Water's dedication to continuing its U.S. manufacturing operations?*

Torregrossa: We believe that manufacturing closer to the customer gives us an advantage — no

"Quite simply, [innovation] has been the single most important driver of Watts' leadership position for more than a century."

— Greg Gyorda

matter what part of the world we're in. We look at our manufacturing facilities around the world as centers of excellence that provide the best product at best price in each of their markets.

Our Asia-Pacific business is growing at a much faster rate, mainly because their market is growing at a faster rate than in the U.S. We're starting to sense more optimism in Europe after some tough years. Our team there has done a lot of work to transform the business.

MJM: *I know you're very proud of the quality of product that comes out of your facilities. Talk about that what drives that?*

Gyorda: At Watts Water, product innovation is king. Quite simply,

the code-driven products in our industry — including temperature and pressure relief valves, pressure



A technician installs a water-processing system using Watts Water Technologies products at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

reducing valves and backflow prevention devices. We've continued this investment in innovation with products like our OneFlow™ anti-scale systems, new Triton™ pipe fusion system and PolyStar™ piping systems.

It's an exciting time to be in the industry, and to be with a company

large number of long-term associates who, from a career standpoint, have made the decision to stay with Watts Water for 20, 30, 40+ years. This was very apparent to me last year when we recognized a large group of people who work at our Franklin, N.H., facility during the ribbon cutting ceremony of our new

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many unique blends of people to work together as a team. When the Dormont acquisition occurred in 2005, my unique skill set was appreciated and valued by Watts Water, which has allowed me to have a great career experience.

MJM: What's next for Watts

Water? And what do you see coming during the remainder of this year and into 2015 with the U.S. economy?

Torregrosa: We're optimistic about the economy. The residential market started to come back first and is in pretty good shape. We are seeing an uptick in commercial, and if we can get consistent improve-



Among the Watts team who greeted us at their headquarters were: Vice President Tim O'Neill, Directors Greg Gyorda and Stephanie Ewing, and Marketing Manager Michael Gaulin.

ment in that market, it will be an exciting time for all of us.

MJM: Suellen, it's been a pleasure talking with you and learning more about your background. You've achieved much well-deserved professional success, and as you mentioned earlier, you learned a lot from some of your mentors along the way. So as we close, I wondered if you'd do us the favor of sharing some words of wisdom for the next generation enter-

ing our industry — women and men alike?

Torregrosa: The thing I would tell the next generation is to be open to challenges. Take on the tough tasks. Have confidence in yourself that you can figure it out. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Get to know people in different departments. Gain as much knowledge as you can.

ing our industry — women and men alike?

Don't always be looking at what's down the road. Focus on your role today, and do the best job you can at what you're assigned. Everything is a learning experience to prepare you for the future.

Be really clear of who you are and what type of work environment you want to be in. Figure out what speaks to you and what excites you to get up in the morning. Don't stay where you're not happy. You spend so much of your time working that it's important to like where you're at and what you do.

I'm sure people placed bets on whether I would make it or not in various roles over the years because I never fit the mold. Don't let others dictate what you can become. Work hard and show them what you're capable of. 🌐

"We believed it was very important for us to support the customer through a shorter supply chain — having our product made here in the U.S."
— Suellen Torregrosa

