

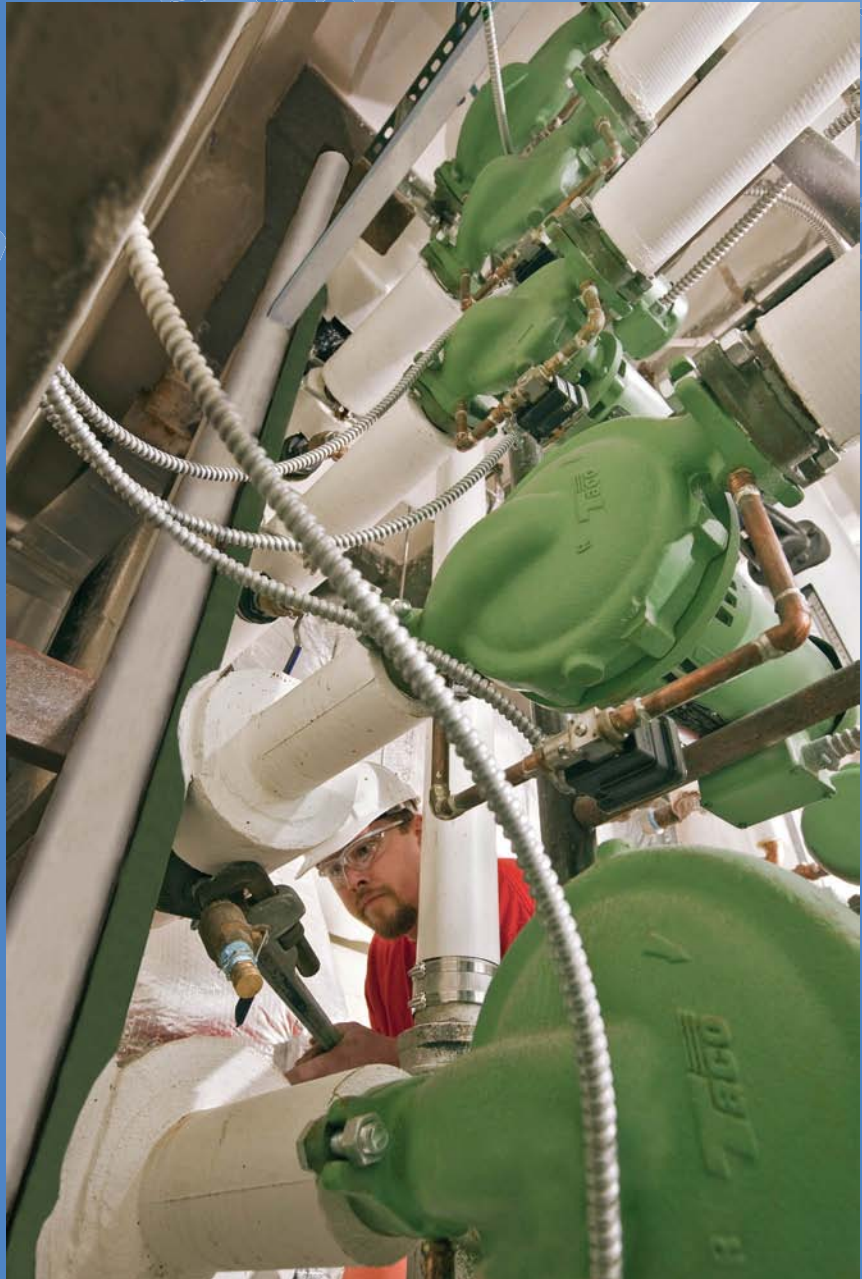
Southern **PHC**

plumbing • heating • cooling

**Taco: Powerhouse
Comfort Solutions
Provider Goes
Global, Realigns**

**Product Focus:
Heating and
Cooling**

Company Profiles



Southern Trade Publications
P.O. Box 7344
Greensboro, NC 27417
Change Service Requested



Cover Story



“These are exciting times”

Taco: Powerhouse Comfort Solutions Provider Goes Global, Realigns

Lately, Taco has refined its structure and strategic mission, and has stretched into a new, global comfort zone.

Now in the midst of a strategic growth mission, Taco pros strive to improve the energy performance of their technology, and systems, at every level. Fortunately, it's a mission that also improves comfort and indoor air quality, and that's evolved into Taco's new brand – Taco Comfort Solutions.

Some refer to Taco, Inc.'s radical makeover as “evolutionary,” while others readily call it “revolutionary.”

Crucible Moment

Either way, the Cranston, RI manufacturer we once knew as the steady, reliable supplier of green pumps and hydronic components has entered a deliberate growth phase.

The crucible moment for Taco came when Chairman and CEO, Johnny White Jr. brought Wil VandeWiel in as Taco's President and COO. VandeWiel, a native of the Netherlands who is also a U.S. citizen, immediately began collaborating with other managers for Taco's very recent, strategic acquisition of Askoll, a world class pump manufacturer of high efficiency, ECM pumps located in Sandrigo, Italy.

The new company ushered-in Taco's transition from an American company based in Rhode Island to a global company based in America.

“There were dark clouds on the ho-



Taco's Wil VandeWiel, President and COO, and Johnny White, Chairman and CEO.



Johnny White signs the acquisition contract in Italy to buy Askoll, the Italian pumps manufacturer.

rizon,” recalled VandeWiel of his earliest discussions with White. New, DOE regulatory mandates set an aggressive pace for needed change.

But the clouds began to part as stars aligned. The timing of Taco's initial partnership with Askoll was just right, availing ECM (electronically commutated motor) technology. VandeWiel's management and operational strengths

were a great fit. It was also soon apparent that Taco's culture and philosophy were a perfect fit for Askoll – making a full acquisition the ideal extension of “family” on both sides of the Atlantic.

“We weren't just dreaming of bigger things and playing with ideas over the past several years,” assured White. “Our movement toward growth, and involvement in a much bigger piece of the HVAC industry, has been a long-range, marathon effort. Or, as some say: evolutionary.

“The Askoll acquisition, with Wil as a new, star runner on the team, is the ‘revolutionary’ part of our growth, a defining moment,” added White. “But there will be other, just-as-exciting times for Taco. Wil and I have told managers, staff and employees to strap in.”

Torch-bearer VandeWiel is an experienced executive with a track record of building collaborative teams and achieving growth with a number of top-tier international firms. He served as Area President of Dorma Americas, part of DORMA GmbH, a global access control company located in PA.

Prior to that, VandeWiel was Managing Director for US-based Bosch's Security Systems division. He received a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Eindhoven Technical University in the Netherlands and an MBA from MIT.

Because We Care

VandeWiel joined Taco in December 2014. As he went from meeting to meet-

Cover Story



ing at Taco, learning about all facets of the business, culture and work ethic, a fuller picture of Taco began to emerge.

He immersed himself in all operations to get as complete a picture of the company as possible – straining to see it from many important perspectives: line employee, commercial and residential product developer, customer service, field sales. “Everywhere I turned, I was learning something new.”

But it wasn’t until one meeting when staff members were asked to turn their attention inside – to consider what makes Taco truly unique – that VandeWiel was enlightened.

“That’s when, during a long pause, an employee answered the ‘What makes Taco truly unique’ question with a simple observation: ‘It’s because... we care,’” recalled VandeWiel. “For me, that was as important and revealing a moment as any I’ve had here. Taco’s culture is a caring culture. As we grow, that’s a quality we must hold on to.”

It was from introspective meetings like those that VandeWiel and others realized that – to grow, and to grow successfully – they’d need to define Taco’s enduring qualities in order to hold to them. After all, how could they preserve Taco’s unique culture if they couldn’t say what it was?

“Many insights were revealed about who we are,” said VandeWiel. “This also helped us define who we want to be as the company grows.”

Among the very best concepts are a few that Taco managers now regard as both descriptive, and prescriptive: “To be the company people trust and want



to do business with,” and “Trusted solutions provider.” The ideal of comfort also emerged, and this led to the company’s new “Taco Comfort Solutions” branding.

“We asked ourselves a lot of questions at a very important time,” said White. “It’s allowed us to enter this new phase of growth at Taco knowing what and who we are at a time of change. There are so many good qualities. Among them is a rare dedication to customer satisfaction. That makes me very proud.”

Deliberate Growth

White pointed to two early acquisitions – both in the electronic controls business – and then, strategically, the purchase of Tennessee-based Hydroflo Pumps, maker of vertical and submersible, turbine-driven pumps for use in a wide range of industries.

“Hydroflo was big, and certainly a strategic move for Taco,” added White. Hydroflo does business in the mining and agricultural industries, among others, with technology that’s also used routinely for large, municipal projects.

“These acquisitions helped to set the stage for bigger things, only some of which have come to life,” said VandeWiel. “Of course, we’re very excited to be a global player in the super-efficient, ECM pump business.

“DOE has set some very specific expectations for pump manufacturers doing business here in the USA – with tight definitions for greatly improved energy efficiency,” added VandeWiel. “We don’t plan to be in ‘the pack.’ Taco prefers to lead.”

The Askoll acquisition has also grown Taco’s map. Though Taco was doing a lot of business overseas, Askoll gave Taco access to the largest hydronic market in the world: Europe. Oddly, Taco’s advantage overseas also means advantage at home.

“With Askoll’s solid ECM technology, we can ride the DOE wave fearlessly,” said VandeWiel. “We’re in great shape to respond to tough current regulations, and even more stringent future regulations – making Taco a front-runner.”

System Innovation, Comfort Solutions

Taco has evolved into a leading developer and manufacturer of plumbing and hydronic-based heating and cooling equipment and accessories – paying off its “comfort solutions” tag – for use in residential, commercial and institutional systems worldwide.

The company, clearly in it for the long haul, has gained a leadership position through decades of innovation

Story continues on page 12.

Cover Story

and hard work, always attentive to customer needs and the opportunity for improvement.

Today more than ever, Taco's emphasis is on total systems performance. "Long ago, we got our start in the components business, but the company shifted to an emphasis on the system more than a decade ago," said Gene Fina, Taco's VP of Marketing. "It was a gradual shift, but one that has become the launching pad for Taco's determined turn toward full integration of building systems."

And yes, there's green. It's not just the trademark color of Taco products; today it also represents the company's commitment to efficiency. The firm's system focus has produced many innovations in the green realm, including:

- A host of new variable speed ECM "00e" circulators
- SelfSensing ProBalance™ pumps
- A growing family of hot water recirculation systems
- iSeries valves and Radiant Mixing Blocks for ultimate radiant control
- Solar X-Pumps for an all-in-one control and pump solution
- Building management controls (iWorX – combining HVAC, geothermal and hydronics)
- LoadMatch for commercial systems flow control
- LOFlo systems to optimize chilled beam performance

Each of these products, plus many others, are part of Taco's e-smart offering. It's a tag which gives installers a way to quickly find Taco's most resource-saving technology.

Double-O Goodness + Plumbing Technology, Too

Among the latest product introductions in North America is the 00e line. Taco's new 00e™ Series high-efficiency circulator line employs Askoll's ECM technology.

The 00e introduction, which gradually phases-out the "Viridian" ECM circulator line, stems from VandeWiel's realization of the company's decades-long



Taco 00e pump/circulator family is growing; "ECM technology is our future."

equity in the "00" (double-O) brand – with the 007 and larger 00 circulators as the preferred, even revered circles of preference among hydronic contractors.

As the new 00e line of ECM wet rotor, variable-speed circles for hot and chilled water applications enters the lighted

stage, Taco product developers have received excited feedback from installers nationwide.

"Every change to the circulator line is tied to DOE demand for improvements in efficiency, and installer requests for new flange options, improved starting torque; even web-enabled operation and management," said Doug Bird, product manager.

One function, explained Bird – the SureStart feature, made possible because of the permanent magnet motor – is an ability to shake the motor, thus the pump impeller, to free the impeller of obstructions or minerals. Now that's smart.

Taco 00e circulators also use up to 85% less electricity than a standard circulator and are ideal for use in hydronic systems zoned with circulators or zone valves.

Another introduction is Tacos expanded hot water recirc line. The manufacturer now has a solution for every domestic hot water recirculation



Across the Southern realm, the outlook for access to clean, fresh water is troublesome. Bob Lemons, owner of Austin-based Mr. Tankless, prepares to install TacoGenie hot water recirculation in a home in Texas. Not only will TacoGenie provide the comfort and convenience of instant hot water, but it will save thousands of gallons of water per year that would have been wasted waiting for hot water to arrive at the faucet. It is also more energy efficient and therefore saves money.

Cover Story

(DHWR) challenge and homeowner preference. All systems are designed to conserve water and increase comfort by reducing the delivery time of hot water to outlet fixtures.

Products for new construction piping with a dedicated return line include Plumb n' Plug® (digital or analog), Smart Plus™ and TacoGenie™. For retrofits using the existing plumbing, Taco's Hot-Link® and TacoGenie (with optional undersink installation kit) use the cold water line to complete the recirculation loop.

Finally, thanks to strong product development at Taco Canada, Taco has bolstered its North American commercial booster pump business.

On the Horizon

The shift from component manufacturer to solutions provider has forced an entirely new way of seeing and engaging business opportunities and solutions.

What was once a rather narrow, well-defined playing field has grown into a much broader, more diverse universe for all those involved in Taco business. Sales pros, product developers, design engineers, manufacturer's reps and a host of allied professionals have exchanged the magnifying glass for binoculars.

As they scan the horizon for opportunity, the product portfolio now arms Taco solution-providers with a full, yet growing suite of comfort solutions, the widest selection in the industry today. Adding to the technology is the vast resource of Taco expertise, including residential and commercial training, technical support and online learning, all adding substantially to the firm's customer focus and outreach.

A Bright Future

The only noticeable change to Taco customers – among them, installers, engineers, specifiers, architects and building owners – is that Taco products, technology and expertise will grow and expand, offering efficient, effective and sustain-



At a recent AHR Expo, Gene Fina, Taco's Vice President of Marketing, talks with show attendees about Taco's now-expanded OneTouch ProBalance capabilities, permitting automatic balancing of SelfSensing pumps – and by extension, the entire hydronic system – with one click of the mouse. ProBalance is an integrated, self-sensing control. With Taco's latest technology, the new pumps now have plug n' play connection with all major building automation systems.



Taco has a solution for every domestic hot water recirculation (DHWR) challenge and homeowner preference. All systems are designed to conserve water and increase comfort by reducing the delivery time of hot water to outlet fixtures. Products for new construction piping with a dedicated return line include Plumb n' Plug® (digital or analog), Smart Plus™ and TacoGenie™. For retrofits using the existing plumbing, Taco's Hot-Link® and TacoGenie (with optional undersink installation kit) use the cold water line to complete the recirculation loop. Taco's new SmartPlug™ adds intelligence to standard on/off recirc systems. By plugging a standard HWR into the SmartPlug, system performance is enhanced; no programming is required.

able comfort solutions across a much broader range of needs and opportunity, fulfilling today's and future expectations.

"Taco's destiny has never been just to make things," assured White. "This is a place where our employees and customers can grow, succeed and prosper together. Taco provides stability, opportunity and friendship to all who join the family."

Clearly, Taco's on the move – striving continually to exceed expectations at all levels. Their goal is to help build a foundation for customer success.

"These are exciting times for us," said White. "Each step of the way, we're going to build this to be the best little big company there is."

The company can be found online at www.tacomfort.com. ■