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As markets improve, the benefits of our improvement plans come to the fore...

As forecast in the March 2018 edition of the IMI Eye I am pleased to report the continued progress of the Group with good growth from many of our end markets and a continued favourable economic backdrop supporting our expectations for a positive second half to the year.

For the Group, I was pleased to report sales, profit and margin improvements when compared to the first half of 2017 with strong markets and performance in Precision, the benefits of restructuring and investments underpinning improved results in Critical and Hydronic working hard to improve results and maximise the position of our great brands, products and markets.

Our efforts to capitalise on our engineering and design strengths were evident in the first half of 2018. The Group’s operational improvements also continued at pace and our investments and hard work over the past four years allowed us to respond to the supply chain challenges which emerged as Precision markets hit their strides. All of our divisions made further progress in their half-year Lean audits and I am delighted to witness the enthusiasm and terrific results all of our improvement initiatives are delivering, right across the Group.

We continued to make excellent progress in our IT investments and with further standard ERP systems roll-outs in Critical Engineering and Hydronic Engineering. Precision Engineering is in the final phase of establishing their new JD Edwards standard which went live in North America in 2017.

I am also hugely pleased with the success of the revised internal audit programme which now builds on the improvements already made in our internal controls and extends our audit programme into the operational aspects of our businesses. The benefits of these audits, and the addition of process evidence binders that formally document our operating procedures, will help build an even stronger foundation for the Group.

It is also pleasing to report an improved safety performance in the first half of the year with our ‘Learning To See’ and hand safety initiatives positively affecting the safety performance of our operations.

**Critical Engineering** As reported in previous editions of the IMI Eye, Critical Engineering’s traditional Oil & Gas and Power markets are experiencing a period of fundamental change with continued headwinds in both segments.

In the first half we reported a 12% decline in new orders but this was entirely expected and largely reflected the huge order wins that Andrea Forzi and his Petrochemical team won in the first half of 2017. Additionally, Roy Twite, Critical’s Divisional Managing Director, is confident that we will recover most of that decline before the end of 2018.

Sales, profits and margins all improved in the first half of 2018 and the division is forecasting further progress in the second half of the year.

In the first half of 2018 the Value Engineering programme continued to gather pace and helped deliver £75m of new orders in the period. The initiative has now been extended to include all significant new project bids and has helped to broaden product offerings and to enter into new and adjacent markets.

The division’s Lean and operational improvement initiatives, including key customer metrics, all demonstrated significant improvement and I remain proud of the achievements made across the whole business. It is particularly pleasing to report the massive progress made at IMI Bopp & Reuther. This business was acquired in 2015 and following three years of investment and hard work is now an integral component in Critical Engineering’s Power Generation capabilities.

In addition to the division’s product and operational activities, Critical continued its programme of IFS ERP roll-outs. The system is now live in eleven sites worldwide with preparations now underway to extend its use to IMI Remosa and our Petrochemical businesses. Investments in the business infrastructure also include the roll-out of our customer relationship management system, which is now in place across all of our Controls businesses worldwide.

In order to respond to the slower market environment, the Critical Engineering team continued to implement its operational footprint rationalisation which has resulted in the closure of a number of lower growth sites and delivered a further £6m of benefit in the first half of this year. These projects will place the division in a much stronger competitive position for the future with world class operations located at the heart of the highest growth global markets.

**Precision Engineering** Massimo Grassi and his Precision team made huge progress in the first half of 2018 with significant improvements in sales, profits and operating margins in the period.

The division’s largest sector, Industrial Automation, which represented almost 60% of first half sales, continued to build on the strength of last year and achieved 6% growth, with significant increases in Asia and North America and continued strong markets in Europe.

The Class 8 truck sector represents the division’s second largest market and all of our regions experienced strong sales in the first half of the year, delivering 9% growth when compared to the same period in 2017.

Our specialist Vertical Sectors also performed well with Energy sales up 13%,...
Life Sciences increasing 12% and Rail seeing the benefit of new products and growing 19%, in the first half of the year.

The improved profits produced an overall operating margin of 16.7% against 15.8% in the same period last year, and this was despite a 60 basis point margin dilution related to Bimba.

The Lean score at the half year increased to 72% against 67% at the same point last year. Our Lean efforts today are clearly focused on maximising our opportunities in a climate of growing market demand.

Precision’s new product development will have an evolving impact on the division, as reflected in Massimo’s Vitality Index rising to 11.5% in the first half from 9.5% at the end of 2017. We now have £300m of product updates in the pipeline including a large number with internet connectivity.

Finally, the division’s efforts to localise manufacturing and extend our capabilities in lower cost regions is also helping us to better penetrate new markets like China, India, and Mexico.

In February we successfully completed the acquisition of Bimba and in the five months to date it contributed £40m of sales and £4m of operating profit to Precision’s half year results.

I am really excited about the prospects for our North American Industrial Automation businesses and while Bimba will be margin dilutive in the early years, there is plenty for us to go after. The factory improvements are progressing well and Massimo is hugely optimistic about our combined market potential.

We are well advanced with our blueprint planning for not just Bimba but the whole of our Industrial Automation businesses in North America and we remain confident that the synergy benefits and cost to execute will come home pretty much in line with the numbers used in our acquisition assumptions.

**Hydronic Engineering** The financial results for Hydronic Engineering were very much in line with our expectations and included the impact of actions taken to refocus the division and improve performance in the second half of the year.

Phil Clifton has already made his mark on the division by building on the inherent strengths of our brands and fully engaging the Hydronic management and employees in the continued development of the division.

Third party distributor agreements were reviewed to ensure that promotional discounts and rebates were appropriate and were delivering the desired growth at acceptable margins. New agreements have now been put in place with the benefits being progressively visible in the second half of the year.

A detailed review of product margins and economic movements was also undertaken to ensure that current pricing fully reflects the impact of commodity and cost increases since our last price update. This work was used to inform our 2018 price book, with the impact becoming more apparent in the second half of this year.

Hydronic Engineering’s Lean scores showed further improvement with the Polish site continuing to lead IMI operations globally. Assane N’Diaye and the Plant Management team are now reviewing the division’s supply chain and product focus with an objective to reduce complexity and improve lead times and responsiveness to the market.

A significant event in the first half was the successful roll-out of the division’s new JD Edwards ERP system into the Pneumatex manufacturing and service operations in Switzerland. This achievement, together with the continued adoption of JD Edwards in the division’s marketing operations, has laid the foundations for a seamless and more efficient operating framework for the future.

**Summary** In terms of the second half of the year we are expecting further improvement when compared to the second half of 2017. Critical will become even more competitive through their Value Engineering, supply chain and operational improvement programmes while Precision is expecting to experience strong market conditions in their core sectors. Hydronic will benefit from the actions taken in the first half and should also show good progress in the second half of the year.

Our investments in the Group and the actions being taken to improve our competitiveness are providing real differentiators in the market and I want to thank each and every IMI employee for their hard work and commitment to making IMI Great.

Mark Selway
CEO IMI plc

Full details of the 2018 half-year results, including the webcast of the presentation to the City, are available at www.imiplc.com/investors
Keeping things simple always plays well with the customer. IMI Flow Design in the US has launched a radically simplified pre-configured kit that will massively reduce the time, cost and complexity associated with a typical field installation.

When customers are installing cooling applications in their HVAC systems they usually need 3-way valve connections constructed from a number of separate components. A typical installation might include up to 26 connections, which not only takes a lot of space but also can lead to installation times of more than 1.5 hours. The new pre-configured kits by IMI Flow design reduces that complexity, simplifies the installation process, and, most importantly, makes life much easier for installers.

“By working closely with the rep counsels, we have designed a pre-configured set of standard kits which cover over 70% of the jobs quoted.” said Hailey Mick, Product and Applications Engineering Manager, IMI Flow Design.

With the new kits, field connections were reduced from 26 to 6, helping to minimise the risk of potential leaks by 83%, while taking up to 33% less space and reducing installation time by a phenomenal 80%. All kits are pressure tested to 100psi and a full 5-year warranty is available with every purchase.

And if that wasn’t reason enough for customers to make the switch, as a standardised kit, it’s much easier and quicker to provide quotations, and lead times have been reduced to just 5 days – half that of the competition.

The pre-configured standard kits have already been adopted by customers, with the latest project being the Newton Medical centre in Kansas. Hailey Mick concluded: “The new standard kits are great for the customer, but they’re great for us too. They will significantly streamline the order, delivery and installation process of projects and go a long way towards achieving our sales goals for 2018”.

Lean comes to Bimba

Soon after the completion of the Bimba acquisition in February, our Lean team started a transformation process for all eight Bimba locations. Ambitious targets have been set, with the aim of significantly increasing the Lean combined score in 10 months to drive improved operational performance.

The first task was to introduce Lean and its benefits to all employees. The purpose of these sessions was to create excitement and explain the Lean journey, and offers a glimpse of the company’s future. With support from IMI CEO, Mark Selway, Divisional Managing Director – Massimo Grassi and Ryan Schroeder – Regional Managing Director, Lean has been confirmed as a priority project for Bimba.

Everyone has been very receptive and can see the benefit of improving the operations to enable growth. Signs of change are clear to see; a Lean culture is forming and Bimba employees are driving hard to accelerate their journey.

Pat Ormsby, Chief Executive of Bimba said: “Lean really excites me. The increased investment in our operations is one of the many benefits of being part of the IMI Group. I am really enthused about the future, and everyone at Bimba is ready to run with this new toolkit to transform our operations.”
Security Improvement Programme surpasses 13,000 devices protected!

Since 2015, IMI’s Security Improvement Programme has successfully deployed an up-to-date security suite to 6,274 laptops, 4,515 desktop PCs, 1,089 factory control devices and 1,806 servers. This includes anti-virus, internet browsing security, protection against hackers and encryption of laptops.

We have also commenced deployment of 165 new firewalls and have established a Security Operations Centre that monitors our IT infrastructure for signs of cyber-security threats and incidents 24x7, 365 days a year.

During 2017, we successfully detected and blocked over 37,000 cyber threats, including ransomware, viruses, spam, phishing, hacking and fraud attempts.

In the autumn this year, we will be launching a critical element of the programme, the ‘Be Cyber Safe’ security awareness campaign.

This is designed to get us all thinking about our responsibilities as IMI employees in ensuring that we remain cyber-safe during our normal daily routines both at and outside of work.

The campaign will run into 2019 and include staying safe online, avoiding viruses, phishing attacks, protection of information and spotting fraud attempts.

Meanwhile, if you have any questions about cyber security please mail the IMI Group Security Team at secure@imiplc.com

Supplier consolidation delivers material savings

Critical’s supply chain team has introduced a Category Management structure that is already delivering better value for the money it spends on materials. Category Management is a strategic approach to organising procurement around specific areas of spending.

The technique has built strategic relationships with key material suppliers, supported by global strategic sourcing agreements. These have also enhanced technical cooperation and mutual support in Lean, Value Engineering, Design-to-Cost and innovative technology, where suppliers’ manufacturing expertise can add great value, helping Critical to improve its products and reduce total costs. The agreements also help suppliers improve their own processes and learn more about Critical products and components.

Building strong relationships with a smaller number of key suppliers creates value for both parties, and helps raise growth and profitability.

As part of this programme over 100 delegates attended Critical’s first Asia Supply Day in Shanghai on 13 June 2018. 42 of the most strategic Chinese, Korean and Japanese suppliers were selected from more than 400 Asian companies in the unified Approved Vendor List along with several prospective newcomers.

Overall, to date the number of material suppliers has been reduced by 60%, and several world-class suppliers have been added to our Approved Vendor List. By the end of 2018, around 50% of the division’s spend on materials is due to be covered by long-term agreements.

WRITTEN BY Martin Carroll
Group IT Security Director,
IMI plc

WRITTEN BY Aidir Parizzi
Global Supply Chain Director
IMI Critical Engineering

Aidir Parizzi, Global Supply Chain Director, and Jefferson Zhang, China Supply Chain Director, kick off the first Asia Supply Day
Effective collaboration helps JD Edwards at Füllinsdorf achieve its goals

Hydronic Engineering’s Genesis business transformation project reached another milestone in May with the launch of JD Edwards ERP system at Hydronic’s Füllinsdorf facility in Switzerland. Team-collaboration, knowledge-sharing and plain old hard work played a significant role in the implementation’s success.

Ten months of intensive work to re-engineer business processes and implement a standardised core operating model was necessary to bring the Swiss IMI Pneumatex operation into line with the Hydronic Engineering business standards. As with any business transformation, an intensive examination of processes and resources inevitably revealed some deep-seated issues – and this project was no exception. An extensive data cleansing exercise was carried out across 54 databases that needed to be extracted, cleaned and then inputted into the new system. This essential task was then followed by 23 weeks of testing and 25 weeks of training, to prepare for the live rollout of the system.

Initial results from the rollout were excellent, with the system handling work orders, customer orders and received goods in a controlled environment. Product flows for customer shipments and finance postings were all successfully integrated and automated scheduling of activities is operating at full speed.

The project’s success owes much to the collaboration between the entire Füllinsdorf business team, the Genesis project core functional team, and JD Edwards users at our sister site in Poland who were there to help at every step of the process. Paul Staes, Plant Manager, Füllinsdorf said: “This project is a great example of knowledgeable people coming together and showing dedication and hard work to successfully deliver this business change programme. It makes it so much easier when the team is working well together and following a detailed plan aimed at a common goal”.

With Füllinsdorf having gone live, over 40% of Hydronic businesses now operate on JD Edwards.

Two new products from IMI CCI Sweden

IMI CCI Sweden has launched two products to meet gaps it has identified in the market.

The first is a 2-Stage Dump Tube to help customers meet demanding low noise requirements, that are not met by the more traditional single stage dump tube in a turbine bypass system.

Previously only available as a customised product, following Value Engineering it is now a comparatively low-cost way for plants to minimise noise levels.

A second product launch saw IMI CCI Sweden introduce the DAM-H attemperator, which can operate at extremes of temperature and cycling where standard products with a welded liner will fail. This exciting new product, which was developed in response to a need expressed by our customers, has a patented floating liner solution. This reduces the thermal stresses in the liner dramatically compared to the standard welded design, thereby increasing the fatigue life of the component significantly.

As a result of the innovations, the floating liner design is able to handle thousands of cold and warm starts, compared with the welded liner, which only withstood a handful of cold and warm starts. IMI CCI’s patented solution has a real competitive advantage over current solutions.
Leading train operators and compressor manufacturers across the world have been eager to trial Precision’s patented Adsorbent Media Tube (AMT) compressed air dryers because of its compact design, outstanding drying performance and long service life. In the face of growing demand, IMI Precision Engineering, Leeds introduced improvements to increase capacity and reduce production cycle time.

Since moving to Leeds in 2016, continuous improvement of the AMT cell has been achieved by engaging the team and using Lean methodology. The production cycle time has been reduced, and overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) has increased from 42.5% to 68%. This has been achieved by using many different Lean tools and techniques, such as problem-solving kaizens, improved total preventative maintenance, Kanban inventory system and critical component analysis. In addition, a 300% improvement in capacity was achieved by redesigning the extrusion heads on our spinning machines through a collaboration with the University of Bath.

Leeds Plant Director, Marc Robertson, said: “Our air dryers with AMT technology represent a step change in the use of compressed air applications in the rail sector. With a life span of seven years, they offer levels of performance and reliability never seen before. Following very positive customer feedback, we are now expecting an increase in order volume. Continuous improvement at the AMT cell will underpin efficient production and on-time delivery of a quality product.”

A key ambition for IMI Critical Engineering is to expand our presence in markets adjacent to our core capabilities with our global client base. An example is in our choke valve product line in upstream Oil & Gas, where adjacent opportunities include water injection, separator level control and line depressurising.

The division’s success in these endeavours was showcased recently at the IMI Critical Engineering conference. Simon Lawrie, President, IMI Z&J Houston gave the example of a delayed coking project which had allowed IMI Z&J Houston to win a contract to refurbish competitor valves in a market we had not previously operated in, which in turn, opened up aftermarket potential for the business.

IMI CCI Americas is leveraging its core expertise in anti-surge control valves to address similar applications with known customers in vital mid and downstream oil and gas markets. Together with IMI Z&J, in the year to date, these actions have, delivered £2.6m of project wins while opening up over £40m of new market opportunities in the Americas region.

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The AMT cell team L-R: Marek Andrukiewicz, Mohamed Youssef, Samuel Tewelewe, Krzysztof Bozcar

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Creating an effortless customer service experience

WRITTEN BY Ioannis Tzelepis
Sales Development Manager, IMI TA, Stockholm,
IMI Hydronic Engineering

When it comes to customer service, we can always do better. Our IMI TA sales team in Stockholm, Sweden, decided to revisit the way it interacts with customers, based on the continuous improvement initiative, with a view to doing just that.

The project kicked off with an extensive analysis of our current performance and the belief that ‘we can always do things better.’ It’s a big task, but a project that will add value to both our customer relationship and our internal processes.

Existing processes were examined to identify where improvements could be made and pinpoint where additional resources would be needed to fill any gaps in current service. That analysis highlighted a need to centralise the customer service function as the most effective way to improve how information is processed and streamline how teams communicate. With these improvements in place, tangible benefits can be realised going forward, such as improved Net Promoter Scores.

“It’s an important project,” said Niklas Lundgren, Customer Care Centre Manager, Stockholm. “Although that centralisation process is only 80% complete, it has already helped us more clearly understand the key issues that will help to enhance the customer experience. It will also help improve the efficacy of internal processes and identify cross-selling opportunities much more easily, which should lead to a subsequent boost in sales.”

With improved resources and a programme of ongoing training in the ‘effortless customer experience culture’ in place, the team is well on its way to achieving its aim of setting a new standard in customer service delivery.

Knowledge sharing will boost productivity

WRITTEN BY Eva Niemann
Lean Champion
IMI Precision Engineering, Alpen

IMI Precision Engineering Alpen has aided the development of a new knowledge-sharing platform to improve productivity and product quality at its non-standard cylinder cell. The pioneering digital platform, known as ‘Sicony’, is now harnessing the knowledge and experience of skilled assembly technicians to speed up cylinder production and minimise rework.

Precision Engineering’s involvement with Sicony began last year when Alpen teamed up with Europe’s leading organisation for applied research, Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft. Alpen’s Lean management team worked with the Fraunhofer IGVC Institute which was keen to develop a system that would assist assembly workers. During development, our assembly technicians contributed their knowledge and experience to provide feedback and test the new system.

Sicony is easy to use and during assembly of special cylinders, technicians ‘capture’ the process by using Sicony to create digital work instructions on a tablet. These instructions are revised and approved by the team leader or shift leader. The instructions – which can include photos and video clips – are then available at each workplace on a display and can be accessed via a barcode.

Recording the assembly process for each customer-specific cylinder means that technicians can save time when that particular cylinder variant next appears on the order list. The technician simply follows the approved standard process. Work instructions can also be updated if a technician has suggestions for a process improvement.

The developed software was installed at Alpen in January 2018. Assembly Technician Jürgen Vennhoff said: “When Sicony was first introduced, people were unsure if the platform would truly be helpful. But, after working with it, colleagues started to understand the advantages Sicony could offer. It doesn’t replace the knowledge of a skilled worker. Instead, it is helpful even for experienced technicians and it’s good that we’re gathering and storing a lot of knowledge which might otherwise be lost when colleagues retire.”

Here at Alpen, we are confident that using Sicony to share knowledge and establish best standard practice will also help to minimise rework and improve productivity in further applications at our plant.
Obeya room helps dramatic improvement of on-time delivery and Net Promoter Score

In 2017, the team in Poole, UK knew we had to improve our on-time delivery and arrears. By creating an Obeya room, and getting the whole team involved, we managed to increase our on-time delivery from 39% to over 90% and decrease arrears to a tenth of its previous level.

Known for IMI Maxseal products, Poole manufactures valves that are used in harsh environments across the globe. This is a project based business, and on-time delivery is critical to our customers. But with so many projects and product variations, it is important to keep a visual track of our customers’ orders.

The Obeya room was created in Poole to generate visibility of the production plan, large-value customer projects and new product development. All departments are represented, making sure that every step of the production process is tracked, and issues are flagged up early and solved. Each day, a representative from every team meets, and spends around 20 minutes discussing ‘red dot’ items that need focus as they are behind the plan. The Obeya has enabled cross-function problem-solving as well as lots of small changes, which have had a big impact.

Precision’s Global Energy Sales Director Andy Evripedes said: “Poole has done a fantastic job of fixing the on-time delivery and arrears issue. The result is that the Net Promoter Score has increased to 43, which is in the Industry Leader zone. When we visit our customers now, they are delighted with the products and services we deliver, which leads to more business when they move to the next project.”

A Lean process that improves cash collection to pay shareholder dividends

A team including employees from Corporate Tax, Treasury and Group Finance collaborated with divisional finance teams and Alan Harrison, Group Lean Manager, to develop a new Lean approach. They scoped out the business problem and challenges, then developed a programme to evenly spread the workload, eliminate unnecessary activities, reduce waste, and “error-proof” the process.

This resulted in a simple standardised global process as follows:

- **Estimate current year dividends**
- **Finalise local statutory accounts (30 April)**
- **Complete legal checklist**
- **Agree actual dividends (15 May)**
- **Obtain tax clearances**
- **Pay dividend & any taxes (15 June)**
- **Upload documents into IMI tax system**

In 2016 the goal was to double the dividend back to the UK, which was achieved and in 2017, receipts were accelerated by six months (to 30 June) following the accounting year-end, improving the process from the previous year’s learnings and “level loading” the activity to a relatively quieter time in the finance annual calendar. And in 2018 the annual process has now been standardised in a Standard Operating Procedure (GRP-FC7-012) on the IMI Global Intranet. This programme is fully supported by all the IMI businesses, the divisional teams and shows that a Lean process can really pay dividends in a corporate setting, not just in factories.
Thinking outside the box delivers improved efficiency and another satisfied customer

Collaborating with customers to reduce packaging and streamline supply chain processes is just one way we’re working to minimise waste and create added value in the way we do business.

The damaging environmental impact of excessive packaging has been very much in the news in recent months. So when a visit to one of our largest customers in Sweden highlighted packaging waste at both ends of the supply chain, it was the perfect opportunity to extend our lean tool, value stream mapping, outside of the organisation and into the customer.

Previously, IMI TA products for the Swedish and Nordic markets were packaged in IMI-branded cardboard boxes before being shipped to the customer. That packaging was subsequently removed, and products placed in blue boxes designed for the customer’s automated warehouse system, leading to added cost and wasted manpower. There was an obvious solution – eliminate the IMI-branded packaging and pack products directly into the customer’s blue boxes to integrate seamlessly with its automated warehousing system.

The first blue box packaged products were delivered in October 2017 and the benefits were plain to see. Unnecessary packaging has been reduced by 80%, pallets shipped reduced by 39% and internal transport times driven down from 6 hours to 9 minutes! Luis Soler, Head of Sales, IMI Hydronic Engineering, Sweden, said: “The blue box project has enabled us to become closer to one of our most important customers as well as adding significant value to their operations. It’s an excellent example of what can be achieved when we focus on customer needs and delivered a great outcome for everyone.”

Filling the new product introduction funnel with opportunities

The New Product Introduction (NPI) journey at Precision began several years ago, and the process, as well as the mindset, are now firmly embedded in the organisation. Nine projects have already been launched in 2018 with another ten projects identified for launch in the second half of the year. While critical to keeping pace with market developments, new products are improving our core offer and secures the profit base of our business.

The focus in 2018 has been around structuring the whole New Product Introduction Funnel – from idea generation to launch. Work has focused on filling the funnel supported by the pre-New Product Development (NPD) phase and idea qualification, delivering the product using the NPD tools and supporting the market introduction during the launch phase of the project.

At the start of the funnel is idea generation and the pre-New Product Development (pre-NPD) phase. The pre-NPD phase is now fully embedded in each region and is run by the sector-vertical teams. Currently, 41 projects have been identified in pre-NPD and a structured approach is being followed for each.

This includes ensuring Voice of Customer is clearly understood, competitor product tear-downs are carried out for all projects, and the business cases are clearly understood and committed to. Verticals wishing to get items into the pre-NPD phase now use the improved RWW process (is it Real, Worth it, Winnable) to work out which projects should enter the phase.

Led by Engineering, there are currently 36 New Product Development projects. These projects all follow the same process of regular matrix calls, clear financial tracking (Fast tracks), and project adherence management (batting average). Also, they use the same process to ensure targets are clearly set and agreed to by a multi-functional team, and helps to ensure that we deliver projects on time, on budget and in line with our customer expectations.

The last stage of the funnel is the launch phase, and this has also been developed, and is being led, by the Marketing team. Check lists help to guide teams through the launch of a product helping to ensure we optimise our routes to market. The complete NPI funnel looks extremely healthy for IMI Precision Engineering with great projects identified throughout each stage in all vertical, and all regions.

The Precision Engineering Intranet has recently been updated to provide documents, examples and Q&A on each section of the funnel, should you require further information.
Obeya Wall at IMI Remosa reduces aftersales lead time and increases customer satisfaction

WRITTEN BY Mauro Natalini
Lean & Operations, IMI Remosa
IMI Critical Engineering

The Lean technique ‘Obeya’ (or big room), which uses visualisation to improve work management, has been applied to aftersales at IMI Remosa, with impressive results.

Before the technique was implemented all field service activities, in particular capacity and team deployment were held in a database. The issue was that the database was not easily accessible to all the members of the team, making it difficult to ascertain demands on field service engineers in advance, or visually help for issue resolution.

The IMI Remosa team in Italy created an Obeya wall for the aftersales team, which clearly illustrates the current and future field service work load. The development of a skills matrix also ensured that the right capability is available within the field service engineers team and is presented visually for capacity loading and also for each resource (see images). This has reduced the time taken to identify and match the correct field service engineer to a job by 62%. It is now quick and easy to identify job, region, assigned field service engineer and capacity availability/booked per day. To date, the changes have facilitated a 10% increase in utilisation of the company’s resources. Improving the process of matching skill sets and resource to jobs, and mapping by region, is helping to ensure our customers are never disappointed.

Outages are delivered on time, with increased on-time delivery of quotes for field service engineers and also better performance of the jobs themselves. The benefit has been increased customer satisfaction through availability of experienced resources for the right job, more efficient mobilisation of the field service and key tools & equipment, which are shipped by container to support turnarounds (major refinery maintenance outages) as IMI Critical Engineering services customers all across the world.

Critical uses Lean to improve lead times and gain competitive advantage

WRITTEN BY Nick Rowson-Jones
Lean & HSE Director
IMI Critical Engineering

To run their plants more efficiently, Critical customers were looking for replacement parts to be available at much reduced lead times. This prompted IMI CCI RSM to hold an aftermarket parts Lean workshop involving a cross-functional team comprising engineering, manufacturing, sales, business development and supply chain, along with support from Lean experts and colleagues from IMI Bopp & Reuther and IMI CCI Brno.

The workshop carried out process mapping, cost analysis and outlined future designs, costs, processes and actions. As a result, IMI CCI RSM was able to reduce lead times by 70%, reduce costs and transform its competitiveness.

In Brazil, IMI InterAtiva held a value stream mapping workshop for cell assembly. Amongst the recommended changes was the introduction of a ‘raw materials supermarket’ and a FIFO (first-in first-out) storage system. The workshop resulted in a 58% reduction in the production lead time.

Meanwhile, IMI Fluid Kinetics, which provides noise abatement solutions to the process industries, was able to cut its production lead time for silencers from 20 to 14 weeks, after several workshops had identified 50 improvements that the team subsequently implemented.

New rotary control ball valve offers great opportunities

WRITTEN BY Antonello Vago
General Manager, IMI Truflo Italy
IMI Critical Engineering

IMI Truflo Italy is targeting a number of markets with its new rotary control valve. The new product is a trunnion-mounted ball valve design for axial pressure and flow control. It can be used in a number of applications in the Oil & Gas, Petrochemical and Water industries.

The new product provides a great complement to the existing range of IMI Critical Engineering’s linear control valves for severe service applications. A full range of sizes is available from 1” to 60” with pressure ratings up to class 2500 (6,000 psi). The valve comes as a complete unit with an actuator and positioner from IMI STI.

The potential market for this kind of ball valve is significant and with a positive trend year-on-year of approximately 7%.

We believe that the market is currently in the proximity of 500m per year with the possibility of reaching 700m in the next five years.

IMI Truflo has also developed a range of ball valves that are suitable for sub-sea applications. The valves have successfully met all of the demanding standards of that market and were produced as a direct result of meeting a key customer’s need.
We’ve re-engineered one of our most iconic products to provide even better performance and value, making it much more capable of meeting today’s HVAC challenges.

Back in 1957, IMI TA launched the world’s first manual balancing valve, and since then we’ve sold more than a million STAD valves a year. Over the decades it has set the standard for accurate balancing on heating and cooling systems but now we’ve made it even better.

The popular STAD has undergone a radical re-engineering process to make it perfectly suited to today’s high-rise buildings and ‘low flow’ HVAC installations that are increasingly popular. The changes mean it is even more accurate and better able to cope with high static pressures. Available in multiple sizes and configurations, with or without drain tap, it’s now more compact too.

We’ve re-designed the hand wheel for much simpler operation, and introduced a high-visibility protection cap to make it safer to use.

The design changes to the STAD have also had a positive impact on the manufacturing standard. Due to the latest capabilities of mould-flow analysis, it was possible to identify critical sensitivities and adapt the process to significantly reduce porosity. Additionally, the more compact design supported these improvements in the overall casting quality. An immediate consequence has been a 30% reduction in the scrap rate.

Eric Bernadou, Head of Product Category, Balancing and Control said: “The STAD re-engineering project is an excellent example of how effective collaboration and great communication between different departments, such as R&D, Manufacturing, Supply Chain, Purchasing and Sales & Marketing can deliver success. We’ve been able to enhance an already outstanding product and provide improved functionality and greater value for our customers.”

The Auto In-Plant group has built a Lean assembly cell in our Saline, Michigan facility using all the best practices we recommend to customers – including incorporating our newest tool changer, IMI Norgren® Easy Load.

The cell is increasing efficiency and productivity in our own manufacturing area while serving as a model for other IMI facilities and customers.

Like many of our customers who need to change tools easily in automotive press rooms, we aim to maximise capacity of assembly cells while responding to fluctuating volumes when making specialised, high-value and configurable products. “We have different product lines with the same space and process requirements, so our target goal was to use a single cell for multiple product lines. That flexibility is not practical with fixed tooling, but Easy Load makes it possible,” said Jad Khattab, product marketing engineer.

The IMI Norgren® Easy Load, with the red receiver permanently installed and the blue adapter attached to a build fixture, makes changeover quick and easy for higher productivity and reduced downtime in virtually any type of manufacturing cell or structure. The Easy Load reduces tool changeover time from as long as 10 minutes to as short as 10 seconds and requires just one person to load or unload. Easy Load receivers are permanently installed in the assembly cell or in robotic applications and Easy Load adapters are attached to various build fixtures or tools. All the operator does to load the tool is align the adapter to the receiver and snap the fixture into place. Unloading is equally easy. The Easy Load can also be configured to simultaneously couple electrical connections, pneumatics, and poka-yoke mechanical code for even faster changeover with less chance of operator error.

This ability to change tooling quickly maximizes our plant footprint by giving us the flexibility to manufacture multiple product lines and configurations in the same space we used to need for just one.

Mike Charlton, engineering supervisor, commented: “We think this may be the coolest product ever, and improving our process by using it ourselves gives us a chance to show our IMI colleagues and our customers how it works in a real manufacturing setting. Visitors are welcome at our facility any time.”
Global supply chain project improves customer service

WRITTEN BY Michael Groebner, Operations Managing Director, Europe, IMI Precision Engineering

Precision is taking major steps to optimise its supply chain. Changes being implemented as part of a global supply chain project will improve service and on-time delivery to customers whilst also reducing lead times.

The comprehensive project consists of six concurrent workstreams – all focused on implementing and sustaining effective end-to-end supply chain processes and policies supported by an effective management organisation. This ensures that all links in the supply chain are efficient – from initial order processing and planning, to procurement of parts from suppliers, internal production and then on to warehousing and delivery. The project, launched mid-2017, has tackled issues such as cleansing of inventory and lead time data, and global policies to ensure standardised, efficient supply chain management. Now the project is geared to implementing more effective sales and operations planning, improved inventory management, and refocusing our procurement organisation.

Zack Gorny, Precision’s Vice President Supply Chain, Americas, is helping to lead the project. He said: “The successful implementation of Lean methodology across IMI Precision Engineering has laid a very solid foundation for supply chain improvement. The project, like our business, is complex. The workstreams contain many inter-dependent elements. But, with the support and co-operation of so many experienced and committed colleagues around the globe, I’m in no doubt that we will achieve our aim of providing excellent service to customers through a focused supply chain management organisation.”

Innovative control solution gains prestigious industry recognition

WRITTEN BY Rob Green, Technical Training Manager, IMI Hydronic Engineering UK

Our TA-Slider and TA-Modulator ‘package’ solution was recently recognised at a prestigious industry event at the Commissioning Specialists Association (CSA) Awards. The Award ceremony took place at the Mermaid, London in June 2018 and our TA-Slider/Modulator combination was nominated as a finalist for the Product Innovation of the Year section.

To even be eligible to compete for the prize, the product had to be an innovative commissioning solution that had been introduced to the market in the past two years and our IMI Hydronic Engineering offer met both criteria. The combination of precise control characteristics offered by the TA-Modulator and the ability to configure the TA-Slider actuator using a smart phone, convinced the judges that it was a worthy finalist in the competition.

The solution provides both simplified commissioning capabilities and drastically reduces the time taken to configure installations for maximum efficiency. As one satisfied customer, Paul Cullity, Business Manager, SSE Energy Solutions, pointed out: “Perhaps the most significant saving came from the use of the set-up tools for the Slider 160 actuators, which allowed our commissioning engineers to configure and fine tune each unit’s flow rate from their mobile phones. It made the whole process extremely straightforward, less intrusive and, more importantly, very cost effective. The customer is also extremely happy with the results and has already started to see lower operating costs and fewer staff complaints.”

Industry recognition supplements the endorsements we receive from our customers – encouraging evidence that if we keep on innovating, we’ll keep on delighting our customers and impressing the experts!

Shanghai layout changes improve customer service

WRITTEN BY Sun Chong, Lean Manager, IMI Precision Engineering, Shanghai

The changes – all in line with Lean principles – have been implemented to increase the efficiency of material flow and the benefits include improved productivity and a reduction of work-in-progress. The layout improvements were planned and implemented by a multi-disciplined team from the logistics, planning, engineering, Lean and HSE departments.

A key change has been the transfer of raw material storage to its new location adjacent to the assembly area which has eliminated excess movement and is allowing us to implement a high-frequency, low-batch pull system. This system is minimising work-in-progress, for example whereas previously we had up to two days’ worth of valve bodies on the line, this has now decreased to 2-3 hours.

Transfer of finished goods has further reduced excess movement and increased the capacity of our finished goods packing process. In conjunction with a ‘heijunka’ production levelling process, inventory levels have reduced to more closely match customer demand.

Jonathan Yuk, Precision Managing Director, Greater China, said: “Our project team did a very good job of implementing all of these positive changes efficiently and safely. We are seeing tangible results in terms of increased productivity, reduced work-in-progress and inventory levels and an improvement in customer service through shorter lead times.”
IMI CCI participates at regional safety summit

WRITTEN BY Mike Weddle
Americas Regional HSE Manager
IMI Critical Engineering

A team from the IMI CCI Rancho Santa Margarita (RSM) site participated in the Region IX Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Safety Summit, held in San Diego this March. The summit brought together several hundred delegates from VPP sites in the Western United States.

IMI CCI participates at regional safety summit

WRITTEN BY Jean-Christophe Carette
Head of Technology
IMI Hydronic Engineering

Connected future looks bright thanks to eR&D team

With connected products becoming increasingly relevant to every aspect of our lives, the work of Hydronic Engineering’s Electronics R&D (eR&D) team in Belgium is critical to a successful future. Phil Clifton, Hydronic’s Divisional Managing Director, paid a visit to the team in May 2018 to learn more about the range of developments keeping us at the leading edge of HVAC system innovation.

It takes smart people to develop smart products and thankfully, the eR&D team have more than 125 years of electronics, hydronic calculation and software development experience between them. They’ve been behind the string of innovative developments we’ve brought to market in recent years and they were more than keen to bring Phil up to speed with what they’ve already achieved and what’s in the pipeline for the future.

The visit began with a demonstration of the products and software developed over the last decade and examined how they have helped to strengthen our position in the hydronic marketplace. Our software and apps, for instance, have proved to be extremely popular. More than 1,000 design houses and over 550 people use our HySelect software to calculate hydronic installations and select the correct products for the system. And more than 900 people use our HyTools app on their Android and IOS device every day too!

Our recently launched digitally configurable actuator, TA-Slider and the newly-developed DpS Visio Dp sensor, which is an essential part of our TA-Scope instrument have been well received in the market and the team understands that we need to continually innovate to stay ahead of the competition and provide the leading-edge solutions our customers demand. Phil also learned more about the processes, validation, non-regression tests and agile software development the team brings to every product development programme and was brought right up to date on the status of ongoing projects.

“The electronic and software development team in Belgium is a unique asset for IMI Hydronic Engineering,” said Enrico Milanesi, New Product and Sourcing Director. “Phil has now witnessed for himself how we have successfully entered the actuation market with the TA-Slider range. But just as importantly, he’s also learned more about how ongoing developments the team are currently working on will help us strengthen our position as a leading provider of connected hydronic devices long into the future.”
A working demonstration of connected products proved to be a real crowd-puller when IMI Precision Engineering exhibited at the world’s leading industrial technology show, Hannover Messe, in April. This year’s fair was themed around ‘Industry 4.0’ – the name given to automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies. Precision’s demonstration of connected IMI Norgren products with Industrial Ethernet and IO-Link technology proved that the division is definitely on trend – with products offering multiple benefits to customers.

The display of working connected products on a specially-constructed panel not only highlighted Precision’s capability but also helped to de-mystify Industry 4.0. By watching the products in action, visitors were able to see just how easy it is to use the latest technology. To demonstrate how the technology works, typical failure modes were injected into panel-mounted motion control products connected wirelessly to a visual dashboard. Visitors learnt how the on-screen information about a failure is then easily interrogated to identify the cause of the problem. This real-time diagnostics capability reduces machine down-time and enables swift maintenance action. Connected products also allow customers to monitor machine performance levels.

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Connected products excite interest at Hannover Fair

Our eye-catching stand pulling in the crowds at Hannover Messe 2018

Chris Prince, Global Engineering and New Product Development Director at IMI Precision Engineering, outlined the benefits of connected products. He said: “Industry 4.0 is at the centre of our new product development process. We work with customers to help them realise their own ambitions by providing them with great products. By giving their machines connectivity, and in the future intelligent predictive maintenance, customers will have the ability to plan better, work more safely and efficiently, and reduce costs.”

Showcasing connected products at Hannover proved to be a very good way of engaging with customers and demonstrating how these products can deliver benefits in the real world. Visitor interest in connectivity also contributed to the overall success of Hannover for Precision – with a record number of sales leads generated during the five-day fair.

IMI Orton rises to the challenge of floating liquefaction platforms

IMI Orton has brought to bear its extensive experience in the challenge of designing a customised solution for a complex project on the Coral Floating Liquefied Natural Gas (FLNG) platform in Mozambique.

Engineers from IMI Orton have been working for the past year with JGC Corporation, Japan’s first engineering contractor that celebrates its 90th anniversary in 2018, to provide special triple-eccentric butterfly valves for service on the platform. The task was to explore the possibility of replacing standard design valves used for many years with triple-eccentric metal-to-metal seated butterfly valves that can handle the severe service application and in particular, the multiple thermal cycles per day and issues associated with solid particles in high velocity fluids. The two teams successfully worked together to identify special technical features required and developed a customised solution which also used IMI STI’s actuators to deliver the solution in February 2018.

This win is a significant milestone for IMI Orton and drives new industry standards for floating liquefaction platforms.
Hard work and close customer engagement delivers big pay-off for new apartment project

A 400-apartment city-centre development in Linköping, Sweden is the latest win for our Swedish sales team. And the fact that it won the contract in the face of stiff competition from one of our biggest competitors in the region makes it even more special.

Patrik Rosengren, our local sales rep, was determined to convince Månssons Rör AB, who had traditionally specified competitor products for its installations, that IMI TA’s innovative solutions could compete on both price and performance. “We’ve worked hard over recent years to develop a range of solutions that provide superb value and the very highest levels of energy efficiency and resilience,” said Patrick. “Making sure that we pass that message on to the customer is the next challenge we face and we’re already making significant progress.” He organised a number of presentations and training events highlighting how a mix of our industry-leading products would provide the ideal solution for a project of this type.

“Product demonstrations illustrated how the proposed solution, a combination of TA STAD balancing valves, Therm-D thermostat domestic hot water valves and Calypso TRV-3 thermostat heads, could deliver the cost-effective and energy-efficient performance the project demanded. Månssons Rör AB was clearly convinced and placed a large order and that is only the beginning! With plans in place for more than 1,500 new-build apartments over the next two years on the table, a healthy future sales pipeline is definitely on the cards.

IGNITE sales training unlocks new opportunities

Skills acquired on the IGNITE sales training programme are helping to win new sales opportunities for IMI Precision Engineering in the Industrial Automation (IA) vertical. Only a few months after completing their IGNITE training, sales people in the US and Europe have been reporting positive outcomes thanks to the techniques they have learnt.

In the US, negotiation skills acquired as part of the training have helped one sales person to negotiate a large value stocking arrangement with a customer.

In Europe, a sales colleague has reported how IGNITE has helped him to fundamentally change the way he approaches opportunities. As a result, he has been able to negotiate for a large opportunity with a new customer.

Although IGNITE has been designed primarily for the IA vertical, arrangements are being made for sales teams in other verticals to take advantage of the training. A senior colleague working in the Energy sector in the US recently attended week 2 of the programme which includes role play around sales calls. He said the training had swiftly resulted in five calls with excellent results. These included the potential signing of a new distributor partner in the US.

By May this year, IMI Precision Engineering was mid-way through the global roll-out of IGNITE to all IA sales staff. In the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, IGNITE training for nominated APAC trainers and members of the South East Asian sales teams was nearing conclusion, with the final week of training delivered in June.

Brihony Gooch, HR Manager in Australia and New Zealand, said the APAC IGNITE trainers were “thrilled” to be delivering content that was engaging, interactive and relevant to the business. She added: “IGNITE is designed to make our sales staff the best in the industry but it is also proving to be an exceptional engagement tool. Attendees from across the APAC region are forming friendships and reaching out to one another for assistance, help and ideas. IGNITE is sparking engagement and uniting the team across international borders.”
The IMI Norgren Express app has now been launched right across the globe – helping thousands of customers to source replacement pneumatic components quickly and easily. A progressive roll-out of the free smartphone app was completed in June 2018 including launches in Portugal, Brazil, Mexico and Taiwan. It means Precision customers in more than 30 countries are taking advantage of their own local versions of the app.

Geared primarily to the needs of maintenance engineers, the app enables customers to find and order products by scanning a product label or typing in a part number. It can also ‘convert’ pneumatic parts from competitor brands to the IMI Norgren equivalent. Customising the app for use around the world has involved many months of intensive work. This has included translation into ten languages and working with local distributors who supply IMI Norgren products. In total, there are now well over 500,000 items of inventory available through distributors tied-in with the app.

Launch of the IMI Norgren Express app in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region began with a three-month pilot in Australia last year and concluded recently with a launch in Japan. Along the way, the app launch team overcame challenges in China where restrictions meant an alternative local Android store had to be identified to allow customers to download the app.

Bernard Koh, IMI Norgren Express Head, APAC, said: “The app is live in eight Asia Pacific markets and linked to 24 stock locations. With numerous email blasts, card flyer campaigns, media write-ups and demonstrations to customers by our salespeople, app usage is picking-up with sales conversions recorded in Australia, China, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.”

Familiarisation with the app is a feature of IMI Precision Engineering’s Ignite training package for field sales teams. Shishir Gaikwari, Global Key Account Manager, Energy Sector, put his training on the app to great use to help an IMI customer with an urgent problem.

IMI Critical’s high erosion-resistant valves which are fitted with IMI Z&J’s latest generation actuators and hydraulic power and control units.

During a follow-up visit to the refinery, the Petrochemical team suggested that the customer carry out a computational fluid dynamic (CFD) study to identify how to improve the flexibility of the FCC flue gas line and deliver greater profitability. They also presented a new active purging system which so impressed the customer that they promptly purchased it for all their FCC valves.

A seemingly straightforward customer visit to offer a repair service on competitor valves therefore developed into a multi-million dollar, multi-project contract.

The solution the team presented to the customer was its innovative slide valves and actuator design. Following the presentation, the customer decided to replace all the competitor’s Fluid Catalytic Cracking (FCC) valves and actuators with IMI Critical’s high erosion-resistant valves which are fitted with IMI Z&J’s latest generation actuators and hydraulic power and control units.

The customer in the US had placed an order with their regular distributor for four regulators but one had got lost in transit. The missing regulator was holding up a £1m shipment – and the lead time for a replacement in the US was 12 weeks. Using the app installed on my cell phone, following the Ignite training, I discovered that these regulators were in stock with our distributor in Paris. The customer was informed, shipment was arranged and, the regulator was very quickly delivered. The customer and its distributor were very thankful for the fast response.”

Monitoring of app usage around the world shows that take-up by customers is very positive and is boosting sales. In India, a record number of 244 customers signed up for it as soon as it was launched at a trade fair.

Precision has plans to develop new functionality for the app based on customer feedback.
The Takreer refinery in Al Ruwais, Abu Dhabi, is the largest oil refinery in the United Arab Emirates. In January 2017 a fire broke out in the olefin conversion unit, which produces petrochemical products like propylene.

Following the investigation into the fire, IMI Remosa was asked to help analyse potential hazard sources. IMI Remosa had supplied key valves to the Fluid Catalytic Cracking (FCC) unit, used to produce petrol and diesel in 2015, which was unaffected by the fire.

The review showed that there were potential problems in the system design. The solution was to design a new product, which brought together the know-how and experience of both IMI Orton and IMI Remosa. IMI Orton’s knowledge of triple eccentric design valves and IMI Remosa’s expertise in FCC valve technology resulted in a new 82” (2.08m) diameter triple eccentric butterfly valve which has significantly reduced leakage, to ensure the turbo expander was properly isolated. This valve is the largest triple eccentric butterfly valve manufactured by IMI Remosa and the largest ever produced for this application.

The customer asked to take delivery of the prototype valve in less than six months. Thanks to the excellent collaboration between the two IMI Critical Engineering companies, and the flexibility of the IMI Remosa’s manufacturing site, the project is on track to be delivered early to the customer.
Coal-fired Power wins in Asia

IMI Critical Engineering has secured two major new business wins in the Power sector in Asia. IMI CCI Korea recently won another contract from Doosan Heavy Industry & Construction Co Ltd (DHI) for a coal-fired power plant in the Obra & Jawaharpur district of India. It has secured a three-year contract to sell its first new product to have been designed in Europe but manufactured locally.

The new power plant uses the latest steam turbine technology in demanding operating conditions. IMI CCI Korea will supply the crucial bypass system to meet the customer’s challenging specifications. These included a requirement for the entire atomisation and evaporation of spray water to be completed within one metre of the spray point. The valve also has to meet incredibly tight shut-off requirements. IMI China also won an upgrade project for a bypass system for Phase One of the Inner Mongolia Daihai Electric Power Generation Co Ltd, a supercritical thermal power station. This is a major project in West-East electricity transmission and a very significant project for the customer. IMI Critical Engineering China carried out site visits to analyse the operating environment and arrive at the best possible solution. This included leveraging the customer’s existing equipment as much as possible, helping keep the price competitive and the disruption during the upgrade to a minimum.

Collaboration wins new business in China

WRITTEN BY Steve Green
Sector Head, Commercial Vehicles, Asia Pacific
IMI Precision Engineering

IMI Precision Engineering is breaking new ground in the Commercial Vehicles (CV) vertical in China. It has secured a three-year contract to sell its first new product to have been designed in Europe but manufactured locally.

Based in Zhejiang Province, Zhejiang Tiancheng Co., Ltd manufactures driver seats for commercial vehicles for both domestic and export markets. It is currently preparing to test samples of a new seat-regulator valve designed by Precision’s seat valve design team at Alpen, Germany which adjusts driver seat height when height control buttons are operated by the driver.

It is an optimised design which enhances performance and reliability when compared to the product from our customer's current supplier.

The product is being manufactured at IMI Precision Engineering in Shanghai, China, as part of our localisation initiative. The move to local project management and manufacture enables us to work more closely with customers and to offer high levels of service and support.

The new product is being bench tested by the customer following supply of samples this July. Validation tests will be carried out in the first quarter of 2019, with serial production supply following successful validation.

Kevin Chen, Key Account Manager of the Zhejiang Tiancheng account, said: “Securing this project with a leading manufacturing company is the result of an excellent collaborative effort within the CV vertical. We are leveraging the experience of seat-valve design engineers in Europe and combining that with the project management and manufacturing expertise of our team in Shanghai. Our customer will receive a high-quality product from an international supplier, but with all the benefits of local supply and support.”

The seat-regulator valve project expands the product range on offer to customers operating in the commercial vehicles market. Through ongoing collaboration within the CV vertical, IMI Precision Engineering plans to amplify this new product’s application to other seat manufacturers in the Asia Pacific region.
Customer engagement strategy pulls in the crowds

Hydronic Engineering’s efforts to increase UK brand awareness had a massive boost at the Installer Live UK exhibition held at Coventry’s Ricoh Arena in May. It was the first time we had attended a UK installer event and it’s fair to say that IMI Hydronic Engineering stole the show.

Vast amounts of hard work have gone into creating a market presence built on close engagement with the installer community. We’ve established an innovative social media strategy using Twitter that promotes training and webinars aimed at educating domestic installers on our innovative products and highlighting our capabilities. Simultaneously, direct accounts were created to enable customers to buy our products and benefit from support and know-how from our in-house experts.

The training and system knowledge provided is proving to be a big hit with both installers and the people that train the next generation of industry professionals. “We’ve been working closely with training bodies, including City and Guilds and HHIC (Heating and Hotwater Industry Council), to educate young apprentices in industry best practice and change how training is delivered in the UK.” said Rob Green, Hydronic’s training manager who delivers many installer trainings.

During our Live UK exhibition, we were able to see all that hard work paying off. We had 180 visitors to our stand – many of whom were familiar faces from our training workshops that were bringing along their peers to discover what we had to offer.

Good customer service is boosting NPS

Good customer service is helping to ensure that customers in the UK are more and more willing to recommend IMI Precision Engineering to others – with surveys showing that Precision’s net promoter score (NPS) has reached an all-time high. NPS is an internationally-recognised index that measures customers’ willingness to recommend a company’s products or services to others. Eight years ago, IMI Precision Engineering was scoring −40 on the index in the UK. Earlier this year, that score had risen to +32. Our experience of business-to-business assessments is that a NPS of +30 is truly excellent and can be regarded as the ‘world-class’ benchmark in manufacturing.

In the past two years, a concerted effort to deliver the best possible customer service has been making a positive impact on UK customers’ perceptions of IMI Precision Engineering. The service provided to one of our top accounts, Tube Gear Ltd, is a good example of how the customer service team at Fradley, UK, has adopted a ‘can do’ attitude in caring for customers and addressing any problems.

Tube Gear supplies a comprehensive range of products to the trailer market and prides itself on quality and, excellent service and delivery. In 2017 there were service issues around delays in shipping a large volume of lines to Tube Gear each month. The Fradley customer service team met with Precision’s warehouse management team at Alpen, Germany, and solved the problem by re-scheduling packing and dispatch. To improve customer care and communication, the team appointed named contacts for the Tube Gear account. Work instructions and a customer care plan were put in place along with a regular on-time delivery report and weekly conference call. When recently asked to rate our service, Tube Gear gave us ‘10 out of 10’.

As at Fradley, NPS is a top priority for the IMI Norgren Express customer service team at Manchester, UK. Paul Burton, General Manager, said: “We recognise that our team can provide a positive customer experience that boosts the NPS. We discuss NPS at morning meetings and share both good and bad customer feedback in real time. Each customer service representative also now has at least one nominated account where they are the main point of contact.”

WRITTEN BY Alex Clinch
Customer Support Manager
IMI Precision Engineering, Fradley
A successful HVAC installation depends on more than just quality products. Expert support and knowledge are key added-value services we provide on every customer journey. Our latest project win in Germany is just another great example of how close customer collaboration contributes to a successful project.

Our sales team have spent years working with one of Germany’s largest installers - and a 184-room hotel in Berlin is the latest project to benefit from Hydronic’s high-quality solutions and know-how.

The Holiday Inn Express in Alexanderplatz, is just one of 4,700 hotels the chain operates across the globe. Its HVAC installation will use products from across the IMI Hydronic Engineering portfolio, including TA-Compact-P pressure independent balancing valves, Pneumatex G-Force cyclonic separators, Transfero Connect pressurisation devices and energy-efficient thermostatic radiator valve from IMI Heimeier, Eclipse. The overall solution will deliver precise distribution of heating and cooling throughout the building, help to minimise wear and tear on high-value system components and ensure perfect occupier comfort thanks to accurate thermostatic control.

The long-term relationship with the installation company, Daume, and the expert technical knowledge our Engineering Support Centre (ESC) will provide during the lifetime of the project will help ensure an optimal indoor climate.

Bruno Remmler, Technical Manager, Daume commented: “This project, like many others, has really benefitted from the expert support provided by the ESC and Hydronic sales teams. The technical information helped our site managers and installers quickly understand the technology behind the solution and will make the implementation of this project so much more efficient.”

Providing up-to-the-minute technical knowledge and support alongside a range of innovative products and solutions is what makes our offering unique in the marketplace. Our customers understand that they’re not just buying a product, they’re also buying in to a wealth of support underpinned by decades of unparalleled technical expertise and industry experience.

IMI InterAtiva provides local service in South America

In April 2018 an IMI InterAtiva service team, with the support and expertise of IMI Remosa engineers, carried out the first maintenance programme on a hydraulic actuator that had been supplied by IMI Remosa to the largest oil company in South America.

The service required the disassembling of the actuator, component analysis and mechanical and functional tests, followed by a complete overhaul. Within a very short deadline IMI InterAtiva carried out the service and delivered the upgraded product on the agreed date. It’s another example of how companies within the IMI Critical Engineering division are collaborating to provide a faster, better, more efficient service to our customers.
IMI CCI nuclear team demonstrates its ability to solve control valve problems

IMI CCI has provided technology for nuclear power plant feedwater recirculation for almost 40 years. During that time the IMI CCI solution has delivered exceptional performance. In a recent example that showcases that expertise a customer’s PHWR (Pressurised Heavy Water) plant in Ontario, Canada was using a competitor’s conventional valve technology which was causing high vibration and noise with unreliable valve operation at plant start-up and shut-down. The customer wanted to replicate the success of the existing IMI CCI valve installation in another of its plants and asked IMI CCI to help.

The key to replicating past success lay in IMI CCI’s knowledge of the process. In this case, the valves needed to have a dual mode of operation. The IMI CCI valves had to have the capacity to recirculate a specified flow rate under modulating control and also to prevent cavitation within the pump by having a maximum flow in design fail mode.

Using a bespoke tandem stacked actuator design, which has two pistons spring loaded in opposite directions, the top piston has a stronger spring to block the lower piston flow to 75%. This solution was developed and delivered, successfully meeting the needs of the customer.

Above: Dual pistons with springs under compression. Left: Tandem actuators installed on the valve.

Localised expertise and service win new customer in China

A growing reputation for localised expertise and good customer service has helped IMI Precision Engineering in China to win new business in the Industrial Automation (IA) vertical. Following a competitive process earlier this year, car manufacturer, Haima Motor Corporation, selected IMI Precision Engineering in China to provide a customised engineering solution for its plant at Haima in Hainan Province.

The application solution for the customer’s automated press line is based on IMI Precision Engineering’s modular tooling components. The solution will update and optimise performance of a press line automation system and tooling supplied to Haima Motor Corporation in 2000.

IMI Precision Engineering has been developing press-room technology for more than 70 years. Its automation design, using modular tooling, assists car makers in optimising efficiency and throughput. Cutting-edge components minimise start-up time and maximise strokes per minute – keeping machines moving reliably, efficiently and cost-effectively.

Haima Motor Corporation is the second car manufacturer in China to award automation solution contracts to IMI Precision Engineering since 2017. Solutions have already been supplied to Chery Jaguar Land Rover Automotive Co., Ltd in China. The successes follow IMI Precision Engineering’s decision to ‘localise’ tooling and engineering for its in-plant automation solutions.

Michael Zhang, Marketing Manager, said: “Since the press line automation system installation for Haima Motor Corporation in 2000, we have continued to build a relationship of trust with this customer. The localisation initiative last year has allowed us to demonstrate our local engineering expertise and the good service on offer. Service is important to our customers and our ability to support customers on site is definitely a factor in winning new business.”
Getting closer to the customer

WRITTEN BY Assane N'Diaye
Supply Chain & Operations Director
IMI Hydronic Engineering

We all know just how vital it is to listen to the voice of the customer, but for large organisations it’s often difficult for operations staff to hear for themselves the issues that mean the most. So, we decided to do something about it and arranged a visit to hear what some of our key French and Spanish customers had to say.

The visit was also the ideal opportunity to get to know the local sales teams better. Our forward-looking strategy is to create a ‘one team’ spirit across the organisation and move away from working in silos. Only through closer collaboration between all elements of the business can we hope to improve how we operate, eliminate the disconnect between different departments and, most importantly, enhance customer service.

The operations team had face-to-face meetings with three key customers, Eau et Vapeur and Sofinther in France and Indelcasa in Spain in April 2018. The aim was to bring the customer into the centre of what we do as a business. The key message that emerged was regarding our internal metrics, and to better align them to the customer’s perception in order to improve the overall customer experience. Following the meetings, an action plan was created and cross-functional meetings will now be held every three weeks to bring operations and sales teams closer together and discover ways to increase customer confidence.

Michael Rimm, Head of Sales, Central Europe, said: “These meetings are a key step on the road to improving our communication and processes. It’s a strategy that will strengthen our backbone and help us maintain our status as a world-class company.”

Kris Serrien, Head of Sales, Southern Europe, was just as enthusiastic: “Our teams were delighted about the positive outcomes that we achieved together. Getting to know each other and understand the challenges we each face was a really useful exercise. It’s an exercise I hope will be repeated regularly.”

Research project aims to benefit Life Sciences

WRITTEN BY Eric Favre
Research and Development Director IMI FAS
IMI Precision Engineering

IMI Precision Engineering is working with university scientists in Switzerland with the aim of delivering big benefits for customers in the Life Sciences (LS) vertical. The significance of the research and development project for wider industry has attracted financial backing from the Swiss government. Work commenced last year when a small team of Precision engineers at IMI FAS joined forces with scientists at the Hepia University of Applied Science, Geneva, for a two-year project. The collaboration aims to tackle challenging issues around the use of proportional valves in fluid control systems.

In some specific conditions, related to pressure and flow, proportional valves oscillate and create noise and fluidic variation. Noise is a disturbance for the application’s end user – resulting in noisy medical devices or laboratory equipment. Fluidic variation can be an issue for customers when it comes to control devices such as ventilation equipment used for emergency patient care.

The problem is very challenging because it is extremely difficult to identify the root causes of oscillation. For example, flow turbulences and the movement of shock waves need to be investigated – and to do that we need the help of state-of-the-art simulation and testing tools.

The university scientists working with us can undertake such simulations thanks to their access to super-computer capability. Using one of the biggest computers in Switzerland, they can simulate in three weeks what would take 18 months using an IMI Precision Engineering computer. The project team can also conduct advanced testing using a very high-speed camera and specific light diffraction effects, to film the shock wave inside a valve.

Our counterpart in leading this project for the university, Professor Roberto Putzu, Head of the Mechanical Engineering Department, is in no doubt about the value of the collaboration. He said: “This project with IMI Precision Engineering is an opportunity for the university to inject ‘real life’ and challenging issues into our research projects. Through this work, IMI is making a direct contribution to the evolution of science.”

The project team has made encouraging progress so far in this exciting collaboration. We are now starting to investigate how we might be able to use our findings to eliminate the noise and fluidic variation problems. Proportional valves are a flagship product at IMI FAS and the whole team here is very motivated to bring about improvements.

Some of the project team at a test bench (L-R) Vincent Tanari and Nicolas Deperraz from IMI Precision Engineering and, Hepia scientist, Piero Pontelandolfo
Listening to the customer and responding to their concerns

Maximising our customers’ peace of mind by creating innovative solutions that are quick and easy to install and configure is a major focus for IMI Hydronic Engineering. So when we received some feedback during a customer meeting on how to improve our packaging, we responded.

The TA-Mini-fast fit is a prefabricated solution for small terminal units on fan coil assemblies. It’s designed to simplify the installation and commissioning of HVAC units by providing standardised, pre-assembled components. With anywhere from a 100 to 3,000 of these units making up a single HVAC installation, it is important to give our customers the tools they need to make their installation efficient and accurate.

Our TA-Mini Fast-Fit packaging includes information designed to help customers identify where to install the product in line with their schedule of works. But therein lay the problem. Our mini fast-fits were all clearly labelled with exactly this type of information. In practice, however, our customers found they needed to open up all boxes to access it, which was wasting valuable time and slowing down the installation schedule.

Of course, not everyone complains, so we knew that for every complaint we receive there are probably a few more who are just quietly annoyed. The last thing we want is unhappy customers, so our UK Sales teams contacted the Poland manufacturing team to solve the problem. Thankfully, there was a straightforward solution – double tag both the product and its box so that customers could rapidly identify where it was meant to be installed without having to open and check the contents.

Scott Crawford-Webb, Senior Contracts Engineer for Ability Projects, got in touch to show his appreciation: “Our storemen have asked me to pass on their appreciation about how your valves are being stacked on the pallets and are particularly happy with the new ID labels on the outside of the box. Thank you for this addition.”

A small achievement, but those can make a huge difference to how we are perceived by our customers. This is a great example of identifying an issue, developing a straightforward solution and communicating the changes we’ve made to the customer in person. Simple really, but it shows that when customers have an issue, we listen, take action and develop the solutions they need.

Distributor visit to Littleton caps first 50 years and jump-starts next 50

For over 50 years, IMI Precision Engineering and Penn-Air and Hydraulics Corp. have been selling IMI Norgren products to the Americas market. In 1968, the company began in 400 square feet. Today they fill up over 100,000 square feet.

Recently, Penn-Air’s CEO Cheryl Rhein, President Bob Rhein and their son-in-law, COO Seth Bray, visited Precision’s Littleton site in Colorado to celebrate the milestone, but, more importantly, to look ahead to the next 50 years. Seth Bray explained that the distribution industry is facing significant changes, just as it did 50 years ago. “What I get really excited about is that pneumatic automation is entering every facet of life now. Years ago our components were traditionally sold to machine builders and manufacturers. Today we might sell to a server company or an automated retailer. To succeed, distributors like us need to not only sell product, but design, assemble, install and integrate what we sell into customers’ systems.”

Now IMI Precision Engineering, is investing in manufacturing, infrastructure, and training in the Americas to support Penn-Air and other distributors’ success in this changing world. We are looking ahead to how Industrial Automation is changing and preparing to meet those new challenges. And part of that is concentrating on our core strengths and encouraging our distributors to do what they do best – provide excellent delivery and technical service to customers.

But whatever comes in the next 50 years, the value of positive, productive relationships with employees, customers and, in this case, a key distributor, will become ever more important. Cheryl Rhein explained: “We got started in 1968 because IMI Precision asked. We expanded in 1988 because IMI Precision asked. They also blessed our purchase of our largest competitor in 2000. Three separate times IMI Precision was instrumental in our growth into the company we are today. We are deeply thankful and don’t take it for granted.”
Community involvement goes both ways

When we think of the IMI Way and our “responsibility to the communities around the world in which we operate,” we tend to focus on how we can contribute. We don’t always think about how our communities can help us, or better still, partner with us to benefit both sides. But that’s exactly what happened when the local mayor came to visit our plant.

IMI Precision Engineering Seattle makes bespoke products for commercial vehicles in Auburn, Washington, located between Seattle and Tacoma. At a recent networking event, the city’s economic development manager, Doug Lein, asked me about IMI. He was surprised to learn that a facility as large as ours – $US55m in revenue and over 200 employees – was operating within the city limits. As a result of that chance conversation, we invited Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus for a visit on 1 March 2018.

Mayor Backus said, “Our tour of IMI was a fantastic opportunity to see, first-hand, the amazing array of state-of-the-art equipment that is being produced right here in Auburn. It was wonderful to see not only the remarkable operational center but also the opportunities that IMI Precision Engineering is creating for quality living-wage jobs in our community.”

Not only did Mayor Backus and her team learn about us, we learned how they can help make life better for our employees. For example, the city is helping ease a parking shortage and installing brighter lights along the sidewalk where our employees walk from the transit station to our plant. We also learned how to make permitting for construction projects more efficient.

But what we are most excited about is collaborating with the city to bring good employees to IMI Precision Engineering and provide jobs for Auburn residents. The Economic Development Team connected us with the Auburn School District so we can reach students interested in trades and entry-level jobs. Since the meeting we’ve also connected with Auburn Youth Resources, which helps homeless young people aged 18-22 find employment. Two of their clients are now temporary employees with us. This is just the start – we look forward to growing along with Auburn as we continue to work together.

Gender agenda

In Italy, where IMI Critical has six businesses, we introduced a new approach to building a female talent pipeline from outside the business. The business identified a group of senior women leaders whose skills and experience might be of interest to us in the future, and initiated a regular series of networking events to strengthen ties with them.

After about 18 months, a role came up and Manuela Audone, one of the women who we had met, applied. Manuela was successful and is now IMI STI’s Sales Director. A senior female financial analyst has also been recruited in Italy.

Meanwhile, Helen Afford, General Counsel for IMI Critical Engineering, has recently participated in a women’s leadership summit at the House of Commons in London, which encouraged senior women leaders to become more visionary, visible and vocal and to develop a network of like-minded peers to support women’s growth.
IMI Precision Engineering supports new technical academy

WRITTEN BY Matt Dixon
Marketing Manager, UK
IMI Precision Engineering

IMI Precision Engineering has created a Fluid Power Training Suite at a new technical academy for engineering apprentices in the UK. Fitted with IMI Norgren branded products, the suite will enable young people to develop engineering skills with the aid of industry-standard equipment.

The new £3m academy was opened in March at Walsall, West Midlands, by training provider, IN-COMM, which trains apprentices based at the nearby Fradley site. IMI Precision Engineering, along with 11 other manufacturers, sponsored and supported the centre which boasts world-class CNC machines, automation, a robotics line, metrology and an electronics section. The Fluid Power Training Suite is fitted with IMI Norgren pneumatic and electro-magnetic products.

The fluid power facility will give apprentices the opportunity to learn about pneumatics, using real products that they will be faced with in industrial applications.

Maria Collins, Apprentice at Fradley, and Ramesh Mistry, Systems Support Manager, worked with IN-COMM on behalf of IMI Precision Engineering to create the Fluid Power Training Suite.

Ramesh said: “It’s a great opportunity to help young people across the engineering and manufacturing industry to become familiar with our brand and products. The apprentices at IN-COMM are deployed across a wide spectrum of Midlands industry from small to medium enterprises to the flagships of UK industry. It’s particularly exciting to think that future apprentices will make their transition into engineering armed with pneumatic motion control expertise forged from hands-on experience of IMI Norgren products.”

Gareth Jones, Managing Director of IN-COMM Training, described the new academy as a “transformational project” for the region. He said it would create an additional 420 apprenticeship places between now and 2022.

Sales team exploits digital technology

WRITTEN BY Adrian Miqueo
Digital Briefcase Project Manager
IMI Precision Engineering

Field sales people at IMI Precision Engineering have been piloting ‘digital briefcases’ as part of a strategy to improve sales efficiency and effectiveness. By interacting with our business systems ‘on the go’ via the digital briefcase devices, sales people can save precious time when in the field so they can visit even more customers. With live access to inventory and instant ordering capability, the digital briefcase is well suited to optimising the impact and outcome of selling time.

The digital briefcase comprises an iPad Pro wi-fi and cellular device with keyboard. The iPads are built to support mobile interaction with Precision’s customer relationship management system, Pivotal – giving sales teams easy access to customer data wherever they may be.

The devices provide access to vertical relevant point of sales marketing material via an industry-leading sales enablement platform. This showcases our product brochures, application white papers and highly interactive video content. The digital briefcase also allows instant access to Precision’s IGNITE sales training material via IMI Learn – offering users in-depth support on how to maximise selling performance.

The pilot scheme was launched at the end of March 2018, involving 20 members of the Industrial Automation field sales team in the US, UK and Italy.

Two months into the project, participants were already giving very positive feedback. Paul Umpleby, Global Inside Sales and Marketing Director, said: “People on the pilot are indicating that the digital briefcase has the potential to revolutionise sales performance. With real-time capability and instant access to so much information, the digital briefcase is reducing administration time and really grabbing the attention of customers.”

Formal evaluation of the pilot scheme – including participant feedback and hard data on sales performance – commenced at the beginning of July. If the results live up to expectations, the plan is to then build a compelling business case for rolling out the digital briefcase to all members of the field sales team.

Precision has a mission to ‘build the most effective commercial sales force in our industry’. Adoption of the digital briefcase – harnessing the best that modern information and communication technology has to offer – would support that and be an exciting step change in the way we sell.
I MI partners with local museums

WRITTEN BY Mandip Sandhu HR Business Partner and Luke Grant Chief Management Accountant IMI plc

IMI will strengthen links to the community by partnering with local museums looking to become centres of excellence for science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics development. Partnerships have been formed with three local museums close to the Group’s origins in the Midlands.

The Group will support the Derby Museum of Making, site of the UK’s first factory, with their new Midland Maker Challenge Prize, which requires teams of up to 5 students to design solutions to solve environmental and societal challenges. There will be categories for both schools and higher education. The first challenge will begin in 2019 and will be launched alongside a newly redeveloped Museum of Making to celebrate its 300th anniversary.

At Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, IMI will support the redevelopment of its Enginuity centre. Enginuity is currently a national design and technology centre and hands-on interactive museum. IMI will support the design process for the redevelopment of the museum and will develop an exhibit to be located at it. IMI will also be giving support to ThinkTank in Birmingham, with the restoration of the world’s oldest working steam engine, The Smethwick Engine. The restoration is due to be completed in 2019.

Fixed, focused and ready for growth – Group and divisional conferences

WRITTEN BY Katrina Foeney Communications Executive IMI plc

A powerful and inspiring forum which communicated a clear view on strategy

Following the successful format of last year’s inaugural 300 delegate conference, we held the Group and divisional conferences in the second week of April at Celtic Manor, UK.

This year the conference was extended to include a Best Practice Zone – a permanent exhibition space that displayed ‘pods’ from Group and all three divisions, the IMI ecosystem (first featured in the 2017 Annual Report), a timeline dating back to 2014 so we can see the progress we have made, and operational improvement displays.

The theme of the conference was ‘Fixed, focused and ready for growth’ – chosen to align with the stage of the 5-year plan that we have reached.

Mark Selway opened the conference and discussed its objectives, feedback on the 2017 results, what we can be proud of in our achievements, and what we need to be doing to improve. We also welcomed our new Bimba colleagues to the conference along with other first-time attendees.

The format encouraged collaboration among colleagues and included sessions from IMI’s Executive, as well as group work. Following the Group conference, we broke into divisions so the concentration became more focused on highlights and issues relevant to each business.

Group and divisional awards were given out to recognise the Most Improved Facility, Commercial Excellence and Innovation. At divisional conferences, Engineering GREAT awards were also given out to teams and individuals recognising fantastic contributions to the business.

Feedback was positive; delegates always appreciate the chance to meet their colleagues from around the world, share best practice and take the messages back to their own business units.
Commitment to the IMI Way Day continues around the world

WRITTEN BY Katrina Feeney
Communications Executive
IMI plc

The IMI Way Day has become a highlight of IMI’s calendar and this year was no exception, as every location allocated a few hours to IMI Way Day activities in June. The purpose of the day is to engage with all employees, share the core messages, hear feedback on the core message, measure the level of engagement across the business, identify areas and sites where additional support may be needed and most importantly, to continue to embed the IMI Way of doing business.

The format for the session was similar at all locations – a presentation by the site manager in which we celebrated the successes of 2017 across all three divisions. Employees then broke into smaller groups to complete worksheets giving feedback on the progress that they believe we are making against the Group’s objectives.

As in previous years, sites then took the opportunity to incorporate community activities as part of the IMI Way Day.

- IMI HQ had over 100 employees volunteer on different projects at a garden near a school to be used by pupils and families who do not have access to similar facilities in the area.
- The team at IMI Critical Engineering SriCity in India took part in tree planting activities to coincide with the recent World Environment Day. On top of this, around 30% of the team gave blood and funds were donated to an elderly care home to help fund much needed medical equipment.
- Colleagues from the Hydronic Engineering division in Singapore took over a hall and put on a cinema screening for children with autism and their families.
- Employees from IMI Precision Engineering in Farmington, USA assembled and donated brand new bicycles to a charity which supports children who have been neglected or are disadvantaged.

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