

The continued case for U.S. manufacturing



BY SARAH CIMARUSTI, ASSISTANT EDITOR

AB&I Foundry has been producing quality cast iron products for over 100 years.

In the manufacturing world, “quality is over quantity,” isn’t a unicorn phrase. It’s still very much a real thing. According to Consumer Reports, eight out of 10 Americans prefer to buy products made in the U.S. — and are willing to pay for these products if it means quality.

As we have seen over the recent years, many companies, particularly in manufacturing, have made a case for “reshoring” their business back to the U.S. in order to focus on quality, cut costs, bring jobs home and be closer to customers.

We’re not the only ones interested in quality. It’s all over the national radar, as countries like China scramble to compete with U.S. automation and engineering, for example. As China’s economic slowdown and tumultuous foreign policies continue to make their way into U.S. headlines, we’ve already begun to see a move toward a renewed sense of pride in American-made products.

Many companies in our industry have been doing the same, or what they’ve always done — harnessing the message around their U.S.-made products and reinforcing their commitment to the U.S. workforce.

U.S. Boiler, Lancaster, Pennsylvania-based manufacturer of hydronic-heating products, is an example of a company that strives to reinforce this message. Marketing Communications Manager Mike Hook, who has been with U.S. Boiler for nine years, said that U.S. Boiler has mirrored their branding to the stance for domestic manufacturing, simply because it reflects who they’ve been all along. It was only a matter of making this message more apparent.

Hook said, “Through a little bit of soul-searching, we realized that there were a lot of things unique to our company that weren’t necessarily

apparent. We decided to tag these items in our marketing message with

It can be a product, manufacturing process, company feature or even a



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With headquarters in suburban Philadelphia and operation in Middleville, Michigan, Bradford White builds all of its products strictly for wholesale distribution.



Goulds Water Technology is one of the few pump manufacturers left that are designing, assembling and testing products in the U.S.

a small branding stamp that simply states ‘Unmatched Anywhere’ with a big ‘U.S.’ It’s a little mark that conveys the message that whatever is being discussed is unique to us.

human element.”

U.S. Boiler is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Burnham Holdings Inc. Its cast iron is sourced directly from

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Bradford White plants are equipped with modern manufacturing techniques and robotics while preserving the hands-on craftsmanship that is required to deliver high-quality water heating and storage products.

another wholly-owned subsidiary, Casting Solutions of Ohio. There is power and comfort in knowing exactly where materials come from.

“We know exactly where our castings are coming from and what the process is. [Casting Solutions] takes in vast quantities of scrap metal, and they melt it down to make our cast iron sections. This is vertical integration at its core,” Hook said.

U.S. Boiler reinforces the strength of their engineering prowess and automation technologies in facilities right here at home. The company recently completed a new multi-million dollar engineering and testing center. At this facility, which employs just under 300 people, U.S. Boiler is able to conceive, design, engineer and comprehensively test their products. They have invested heavily in top technology, including CNC machines and work cell robots, which allow for efficiency and accurate manufacturing tolerances. As for the production lines themselves, people assemble the boilers. What’s more is these workers have helped design their own workstations because they know the stations are what make their jobs efficient.

U.S. Boiler regularly offers tours of its facility for contractors as a part of their product training. Some contractors come from as far as Alaska.

“It’s not just about the training. We like to show contractors where the products are made. People who leave our facility understand our commitment to the industry, and

they take that with them,” Hook said.

It boils down to the products themselves. In a specialized and nuanced trade like hydronics, Hook said, it’s important to back your product’s soundness, leaving little room for questions on quality. When quality is jeopardized people tend to question the authenticity. And, authenticity matters to everyone involved.

“You really have to live up to U.S.-made if it’s in your company’s name ... All the feedback we get back from the installers, homeowners and the distribution chain itself, points to an appreciation that everything we manufacture is produced here,” Hook said.

Bradford White, another Pennsylvania-headquartered company, is also vocal about quality products made by American workers. Nick Giuffre, president and CEO of Bradford White Corporation, brought up the hits U.S. manufacturing companies have taken over the last decades due to outsourcing. In turn, he talked about how investing in American manufacturing is essential to Bradford White as well as the

Certified training facility. They also have a state-of-the-art live fire lab and training facility in New Hampshire.

“Our plants have been updated with the latest in modern manufacturing techniques and robotics while preserving the hands-on craftsmanship that is required to deliver high-quality water heating and storage products. We’ve also invested heavily in helping customers understand current and emerging technologies with new training facilities,” Giuffre said.

Giuffre said their message is less about competition, and rather, what they bring to their customers. The company is committed to the professional installer and plumbing wholesaler. Their longstanding business model is to sell directly to licensed plumbing and heating professionals.

“We believe plumbing and heating professionals are the only ones with the expertise to correctly select and properly and safely install a water heating or water storage product. Offering these products via the wholesale only channel allows the professional installer to have access

U.S. Boiler is based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania where they manufacture hydronic offerings.



overall communities in which they manufacture.

Giuffre said, “It’s no secret. American manufacturing and jobs have been getting sent overseas for decades as companies seek lower labor and production costs ... We manufacture our products in three U.S. cities and continue to reinvest in each one of our sites by modernizing the manufacturing operations and adding more and more jobs.”

Bradford White also follows through in its investment in research, engineering and manufacturing capabilities. Along with its Middletown water heater plant, where they are one of the largest employers in the area, the company has its International Technical Excellence Center (iTEC). It’s a 18,500 square foot, LEED Gold

to wide variety of residential and commercial products at wholesale costs,” Giuffre said.

With products and processes close at home, Bradford White is able to do their part in improving U.S. policy to incentivize companies, secure positions and unite the overall industry.

“Our government affairs team works closely with government representatives on a local, state and federal level to help create and improve policies that will provide more incentive for U.S. corporations to keep jobs here in the United States,” Giuffre said. “Creating U.S. manufacturing jobs and helping people to secure the skills they need to be successful in our industry is part of our core philosophy so we are also actively involved in many



AB&I Foundry's cast iron soil pipe and fittings are made from 95 percent post-consumer scrap metal, which reduces the demand on landfills.

major industry associations such as the PHCC, AHRI and ASA to name a few.”

AB&I Foundry, a privately held family company located in Birmingham, Alabama, also emphasizes of the strength of the American manufacturer workforce and enhancing productivity and skill of the American worker in order to achieve economic success.

“The importance of being a U.S. manufacturer is paramount. The U.S. still has the most productive workforce in the world and we provide high-paying jobs to over 200 team members,” said, Kurt Winter, executive vice president of McWane Plumbing Group and general manager of AB&I foundry.

AB&I Foundry's cast iron soil pipe and fittings are manufactured in California, boasting high quality while respecting the environment. This value product has been delivered consistently for 110 years. This consistency, Winter said, is why the U.S. “rhetoric” is believable.

AB&I Foundry deploys technology to measure performance and this takes cost out of the products. For example, AB&I retrofits 50-year-old specialized equipment with modern controls. In this, the company realizes tremendous competitive advantages. The foundry's cast iron soil pipe and fittings are made from 95 percent post-consumer scrap metal, which reduces the demand on landfills.

“We are very conscientious about the environment and continue to identify ways to recycle as much as possible including wood, metal and even sand from our molding process,” Winters said.

In order to stay competitive with oversea production, Winters points out, products follow strict U.S.

compliance regulations that are set into place.

“Our industry is very cost-driven and AB&I has to stay competitive with overseas prices. The fact is that our products are manufactured in the USA with strict oversights ensuring compliance and we also offer a robust warranty, which allows our customers to sleep at night,” Winters said.

AB&I Foundry makes a strong case for how being U.S.-based connects them

better to their community as well as abroad. With this they are capability they are able to sponsor libraries, local non-profit daycare, local industrial arts schools, theater and local schools, and support these causes in a hands-on fashion. AB&I also holds regular open houses for the community to spotlight its exemplary environmental control systems and practices. These events allow AB&I Foundry to demonstrate to the community how far-reaching these products travel to places like Saudi Arabia, Guam, Mexico and are used in iconic buildings in New York City including the Freedom Tower/World Trade Center.

Goulds Water Technology is another company that has stuck to its American roots for well over century. The company has 150 years in upstate New York and employs over 300 employees between their Seneca Falls and Auburn facilities.

Chris Preston is a global residential product manager with expertise in submersible and jet pumps and residential pumping systems. For more than 10 years, he has worked for Xylem Inc. and its Goulds Water Technology brand as a product design engineer and project manager on multiple global new product development projects.

Xylem's Goulds Water Technology has developed a long-term pride for solving domestic water problems and contributing to mechanical pump innovation. They manufacture their products at their facility in Auburn.

“We start from the ground-up, so we do all of the design and development in-house. We think that there is a great amount of pride and integrity in the work we do here,” Preston said.

Goulds Water Technology is one of the few pump manufacturers left that are designing, assembling and testing products in the U.S. Preston explains the perks of its facilities being made easily accessible to representatives.

“USA-built products not only give us a sense of pride, but also, our reps appreciate that our products are made here. They tour our facilities and bring their customers here to learn about the products and see how they are built. They can see the money we've invested. We wouldn't be able to do that if our facilities were in other parts of the world because they wouldn't be easily accessible,” Preston said.

Across the U.S., manufacturers have continued to play at the top of their game in automation and efficient engineering. Over the last three years, Goulds invested a significant amount of money to create a lean manufacturing facility where they brought in a lot of automation. Part of it was about producing products that are safer, quicker and with a higher level of quality.

“Though we're a mechanical pump company, we have a lot of electrical controls focused on solving needs of our customers, improving efficiency and giving them better protection and longevity out of the products they're purchasing,” Preston said. “On the manufacturing side, our facilities are always undergoing continuous improvement. We have scanning technology to make sure all the pump pieces are in the box or that we have the right horsepower motor matched to the pump. We aim to eliminate any potential mistakes in the manufacturing process that would ultimately not provide the product the customer is looking for at the end.”

For the four companies mentioned — U.S. Boiler, Bradford White, AB&I Foundry and Goulds Water Technology — the most common thread is that remaining a quality-driven manufacturer upholds their responsibility to the American fabric and world at large. Though we can not predict and project what the future holds for them in their given U.S. markets, we have long seen how the unique economies of other countries can affect our own. From these U.S. manufacturers' perspective, they are doing the right thing by sticking to their American roots, and remaining as high-tech and efficient as possible. ●