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AB&I Team Member Profile

AB&I's Kevin McCullough Reflects on the Foundry's 100 Years in Business



When asked about the biggest change he's seen in the foundry industry since joining AB&I in 1992, Kevin McCullough is quick with a reply: "The culling process." As the vice president of AB&I's custom castings division, Kevin has seen major changes in a variety of facets of the business, but the biggest is the fact that there are so many fewer players in the market.

"When I started here, there were seven major pipe and fittings foundries in the country; now there are three."

The consolidation that has occurred in the foundry industry since the 1980s has been dramatic. Faced with modernizing to meet new environmental and other standards or closing down, many have shut their doors or merged with other foundries. The remaining foundries tended to become specialists.

"In the old days, many foundries would try to do it all - iron, brass, and steel. They served a local market, and rarely shipped out of state. Now, we all specialize in one type of metal and ship anywhere in the world. It's been a real change for us."

During Kevin's fourteen years with AB&I, foundry systems and methods have also changed. "When I came here, there was no Quality Control department, and we were wasting 15% of our iron. Today, quality is king and our waste rate is down around 3%."

Kevin attributes AB&I's longevity to its leadership team and its willingness to change with the times. "The thing I like about AB&I is that it's always changing, but the thing I don't like about AB&I is that it's always changing. The fast-pace of the place definitely keeps us all on our toes, and keeps us attuned to the market."

Kevin credits AB&I CEO, Allan Boscacci, with keeping the momentum going, especially during challenging times. "Allan always reminds us that innovation and constant improvement are the name of the game around here. There is no fear of failure - Allan doesn't dwell on the mistakes we've made, he just keeps pushing us forward."

Kevin comes from a long line of foundry people. "It's definitely an in-your-blood industry," says Kevin, who remembers, as a child, taking lunch to his grandfather at the foundry he worked at in Britain.

As for the future, Kevin is distinctly upbeat. "It's not a perfectly level playing field right now, with the Chinese selling below cost in the US, but their costs are going up and they will not be able to subsidize iron forever. For us, the danger years have passed, and we're already in a global marketplace, where our new technologies make us very competitive."

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Perspective

Why Was 'World Cup Fever' Barely a Sneeze in the US?

Did the planet go nuts, or are we Americans totally clueless when it comes to International culture?

I don't know about you, but I'm glad the whole World Cup frenzy is behind us. It seems like months passed with news full of guys with unpronounceable names in shorts and funny shirts kicking a ball for hours to score one or two points. I know, I know, it was *the* topic of discussion for literally billions of people around the world. Commentators credited the World Cup with everything from shining the spotlight on the slaughter in Darfur to bringing the Germans out of their state of national clinical depression. Maybe I'm "too American," but I gotta tell you, I just don't get it.

Never mind that soccer has never been a big hit with me. Frankly, I don't even know all the rules, and certainly not the fine points, so I never really got into the game. That's not my problem. My problem has more to do with the *importance* that so many people put on this tournament.

We've all read stories about a hundred or a thousand people trampled to death in some South American or Eastern European sports stadium when the wrong team won a game (match?). As Americans, we can't really fathom that. Sure, we're passionate about our sports teams, but that passion normally extends to waving a giant foam finger or forming a "wave," or, in the extreme, painting our bodies and sitting in an icy stadium in Green Bay. We don't kill people if our team loses, nor do we attach any nationalism to a victory or giant shame to a loss. Not so with soccer. It seems that millions, maybe billions, of our fellow travelers on Planet Earth see their country's soccer team as truly important to their world status as a people.

Ask the average American what he thinks about the World Cup and you'll get one of two replies: 1) Ain't Italy great?, and, 2) The what?

Why don't we care more? What is it about American culture that causes us to yawn at what much of the rest of the world sees as critical to their very well-being? Are we arrogantly dismissive of anything not native to our shores? If we can't be the big dog in the fight, do we just choose to pick another arena?

I think we may be guilty of a certain amount of parochialism, but I also think America is dominant in so many areas - technology, economic development, standard of living - that we just can't focus so much attention on any one thing like a soccer match. For most of us, sports are a passing amusement while we live our lives. It seems that for many, in other less fortunate nations, the ability to kick a ball between two goal posts takes on a nationalistic quality that transcends mere entertainment.

I have, however, thought about all this in a little lighter mode, too. In fact, being the marketing genius I have always considered myself to be, I have come up with a program designed to bring Americans into the soccer age. I have considered that more Americans will watch the game if it fits better into our domestic sports template. With the goal of increasing market share for soccer in America, I propose the following changes be made to better market the sport:

1) Make each goal worth 6 points instead of 1. Americans think big, and winning 12-6 just sounds better than winning 2-1;

2) Give players some protective gear and encourage them to mix it up a little between plays. Nothing gets the blood going like a good old-fashion bench-emptying;

3) Plant stories in the press about drug use and sex involving players and other media celebrities;

4) Provide cheerleaders in skimpy garb to spur on the team to score that next 6 points;

5) Tie beer consumption to manliness, as exemplified by major team members. Make it so if you don't watch soccer and drink beer, you might as well wear a dress.

6) Add video replay to the coverage, and coach the commentators to argue over what the replay actually shows.

7) Add color commentary to the TV coverage, and make sure no error or missed shot is ever forgiven or forgotten.

I'm sure I could think of other ways to bring soccer to life in the US. Maybe just the fact that it is the most popular game among young people, outstripping Little League baseball and Pop Warner football by a long shot, will do the trick. Still, a little marketing genius couldn't hurt, either.

While on the subject of sports in America, I couldn't help but wonder at the recent coverage of Jose Conseco being traded from the San Diego Surf Dawgs to whatever the Long Beach team is, so he could be closer to home. It's a wonder he has any time for baseball, what with promoting his book about steroids in baseball. Would Babe Ruth have withstood the media scrutiny today's players face if word of his drinking and womanizing had taken center stage? Are steroids really the scourge we've made them out to be? Who should throw the first stone?

AB&I Joins Bay Area Century Club with 100th Anniversary

AB&I takes its place this year among a select group of Bay Area companies who have managed to survive through a full 100 years of continuous operation. A glimpse at some of the other members of this unusual group reveals some familiar names, but also some not so well known:

San Francisco Bar Pilots, San Francisco -
ship piloting - 1835;
McAvoy-O'ara co., San Francisco, funeral
home - 1848

Boudin Bakery, San Francisco -
food service - 1849

Tadich Grill, San Francisco - restaurant - 1849

Halsted, N. Gray-Carew & English, San Francisco - funeral
home - 1850

Phoenix Day, San Francisco, lighting manufacturer - 1850

Haas Brothers, San Francisco, food/liquor wholesaler - 1851

Wells Fargo Bank, San Francisco, banking - 1852

PG&E, San Francisco, electric and gas utility - 1852

Shreve & Company, San Francisco, jewelry store - 1852

Bullock & Jones, San Francisco, men's apparel - 1853

Cliff House, San Francisco, restaurant - 1863

Sherman Clay, San Francisco, piano sales - 1870

Levi Strauss, San Francisco, apparel - 1873

Bank of the West, San Francisco, bank - 1874

Schmitt Heating Company, San Francisco, HVAC - 1876



Chevron, San Ramon, oil and gas - 1879

Beltramo's, Menlo Park, wine & liquor store - 1882

Wente Vineyards, Livermore, winery - 1883

Mexferd Pawn Brokers, San Francisco - 1884

Caito Fisheries, San Francisco, fish processing - 1885

Fior D'Italia, San Francisco, restaurant - 1886

Swinerton Builders, San Francisco,
construction - 1888

Del Monte Foods, San Francisco, food - 1880

Center Hardware, San Francisco, hardware store - 1880s

California Saw and Knife, San Francisco, knives - 1886

Drewes Bros Meats, San Francisco, butcher - 1889

Ching Lee Laundry, San Mateo, laundry - 1880s

Southport Land & Commercial, San Francisco, real estate - 1890

Cherin's Appliances, San Francisco, appliance sales - 1892

Pedersons' Furniture, Santa Rosa, furniture store - 1892

Morrison Foerster, San Francisco, law firm - 1892

Molinari Salami, San Francisco, salami - 1896

Anchor Brewing, San Francisco, beer - 1896

McRoskey Mattress Co., San Francisco, mattresses - 1899

Oaks Card Club, Emeryville, card club - 1890s

Mechanics Bank, Richmond, banking - 1905

Bechtel Corporation, San Francisco, engineering - 1906

King-American Ambulance, San Francisco, ambulance - 1906

Wixson Honored by California Cast Metals Association



AB&I's Kip Wixson has recently been presented with the Erwin G. Tetzlaff Memorial Award, named in honor of the first president of the California Cast Metals Association (CCMA). The purpose of this award, as stated by the CCMA, is to honor those who "exemplify the finest qualities of integrity, professionalism, and service to the foundry industry and to CCMA."

In bestowing this award, CCMA president Ed Ritelli, Jr. spoke of Kip's 45 year career at AB&I, and the many contributions he has made to the foundry and to the industry.

"It brings CCMA great pleasure to recognize Kip Wixson for his outstanding achievement and contribution to the foundry industry, as he prepares to retire from a magnificent career of accomplishment and service of nearly five decades," said Ritelli.

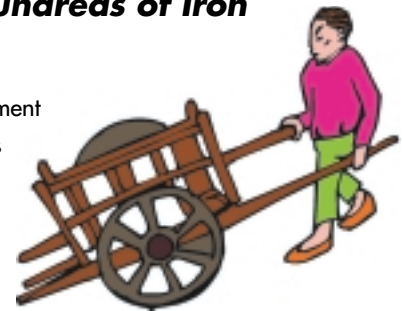
Please join with the entire team at AB&I in extending Kip a heartfelt congratulations on his receipt of this much-deserved industry recognition.

China To Close Hundreds of Iron Foundries

China's National Development and Reform Commission has recently announced the closure of up to 248 iron and steel plants, in an effort to reduce the amount of excessive production. Even

with the large number of exports to America and Europe, and the sale of products at below cost to these areas, China cannot find distribution for all its iron and steel production.

According to the report, up to 100 million tons of production will be eliminated by 2010, mostly through the closure of outdated plants, using obsolete production methods. Most of these plants are located in the northern provinces of Hebei and Shanxi.





AB&I Gears Up for 100 Year Bash August 18

The finishing touches are being applied to the myriad plans and details going into the upcoming 100th Anniversary celebration at the Oakland Zoo on August 18.

"We're opening the zoo and park to the AB&I team members and their families," said AB&I human resources manager, Michael Lowe, "and have a full evening of festivities planned. It should be a party to remember."

Various AB&I team members have been planning this party for over a year. The management team commissioned an artist to create a unique, three-dimensional art piece that depicts major events, team members, and institutions that have characterized AB&I since its founding in 1906.



The art piece will be unveiled at the ceremony, then placed on permanent display in the lobby of the AB&I headquarters in Oakland.

"This is our way of giving a special 'thank you' to all of the team members, past and present, whose efforts have brought us to the end of our first 100 years in business," said AB&I's Kip Wixson.

The celebration on August 18 will include food, fun, and entertainment for all team members and their immediate families, including the 'run' of the neighboring amusement park with rides and special activities.

"This party has been 100 years in the making," said Michael Lowe. "We're doing everything we can to make it truly memorable for everybody in attendance."

Just for Fun...

Guess Who.....?

- Guess who invented the flush toilet?
British nobleman Sir John Harington, in 1596. He built one for himself and one for Queen Elizabeth.
- Guess who still uses ancient sewer systems?
Rome and Istanbul still uses systems dating back hundreds of years.
- Guess who started a toilet paper shortage in 1973?
Johnny Carson. By stating on his show that there was a TP shortage, he actually caused a run on the stuff.
- Guess who invented the pipe wrench?
Daniel C. Stillson, in 1870. Some old timers still call the tool a "Stillson."
- Guess who has reportedly died on a toilet?
King George II in 1760, Catherine the Great in 1796, and Elvis Presley.
- Guess who first enjoyed indoor plumbing?
The Harappa civilization in India, 2500BC, but you already knew that.

Guess who invented the locks that indicate when a bathroom is occupied?
Arthur Ashwell, in 1882, invented a lock mechanism that displayed the word "engaged" when the lock was closed. He patented it in 1885, and nobody ever walked in on him after that.



So You Think You Know Everything...

- How many ridges are there around the edge of a dime? 118.
- A goldfish has a memory span of three seconds.
- A "jiffy" is an actual measurement of time for 1/100th of a second.
- Al Capone's business card said he was a used furniture dealer.
- Almonds are a member of the peach family.
- An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.
- Babies are born without kneecaps. They develop at age 2-6 years.
- Butterflies taste with their feet.
- "Dreamt" is the only English word that ends in "mt."
- If the population of China walked past you in single file, the line would never end, due to the rate of reproduction.
- Average Americans spend 6 months waiting at red lights during their lives.



Favorite golf cartoon...

