



ITEMS

NEWSLETTER

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Kip Wixson Addresses AFS on 100th Anniversary of Foundry



The American Foundry Society, a leading industry trade group, recently invited AB&I's Kip Wixson to speak at their annual convention. The topic? AB&I's 100th Anniversary, and just why AB&I has prospered during these years, while the vast majority of pipe foundries have consolidated or gone out of business. "It's been a challenging century for businesses in general," said Wixson, "and doubly so for foundries."

For most of the past 100 years, dozens of foundries across the United States produced pipe and fittings, many for their local markets only. As competitive pressures mounted, many of these foundries were forced to team up with former competitors, forming larger companies, serving wider geographical areas. This trend continued at a moderate pace until new environmental regulations were adopted by

local, state and the federal governments, creating huge pressures for traditional "smokestack" industries. Many foundries in the 1960s and '70s looked at the coming regulatory environment and simply threw in the towel, refusing to make the investments necessary to stay in business. Others sought consolidation partners at a frenzied pace.

Throughout these years, said Wixson, AB&I remained committed to the foundry

business and to their leadership position. The decision was made early on to make the necessary investments, to not only remain in compliance with environmental regulations, but to increase productivity in order to stay competitive with any foundry, anywhere in the world.

Wixson, in his speech to the AFS, attributed AB&I's longevity to three corporate "personality" traits that have seen the foundry through the most difficult of times: Optimism, Flexibility, and Commitment to Innovation.

"We have lived through a number of disasters," said Wixson, "from the 1906 earthquake, to World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, fires, recessions, double digit inflation, 9/11 disaster, and we are still here." He continued by saying

that the Number One attribute at AB&I is optimism. "Allan Boscacci, like his father, Arnie, before him and, I suspect, his grandfather, Joseph, never doubted we would make it," said Wixson. "Under the most trying conditions, the only question was, not will we survive, but what will we do to survive? That unwavering confidence is a Boscacci legacy, and it is the bedrock of AB&I."

"Teamwork is the soul of AB&I. It doesn't just happen; you have to work at it every day."

On the subject of flexibility, Wixson reminded the audience that virtually every plan developed by the AB&I team had to be changed over the years, in the face of a changing world scene. "Our state went from

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Perspective

A few thoughts on turning 100, meaningless mediaspeak, and gutless politicians

I just gave a speech at an American Foundry Society gathering. Putting together a presentation like that forces you to think in a different way. I've spent over forty years at AB&I slaying the daily dragons, with only the occasional luxury of thinking philosophically about what was really going on. In preparing to talk about why AB&I has lasted so long, while other good foundries have simply closed up shop, I was reminded of what a truly remarkable place our foundry is; remarkable not just for its equipment and systems, but mainly for its people.

Only a fraction of 1% of businesses make it to 100 years. Those who do can be proud that they have withstood the destructive nature of change, the cataclysms of a century of American history, and the competitive pressures of young turks trying to make THEIR marks on the world. I've written before of what life was like when AB&I got started in 1906 – things like the life expectancy being only 47 years, the fact that 90% of doctors at the time never went to college, and only 6% of the population had graduated from high school. The amount of change that has occurred in AB&I's 100 years has been staggering, but our people have been more than up to the task. I just can't say enough about the hundreds of people who have made AB&I what it is today, and who are laying the groundwork for our next 100 years. I am proud to be associated with such fine people, and I thank my lucky stars that I have been able to spend a career with them.

Is anybody else out there tired of how our media are changing the English language (and not for the better!), and introducing little meaningless phrases into our lexicon that serve no real purpose, other than to fill time in a 24-hour news

cycle? Take, for instance, the phrase, "That being said." Whenever somebody utters those words, you know sure as shootin' that they are going to contradict what they just said in the very next sentence. "That being said, let me also say that I was totally full of bull when I just said what I told you." What's the point of this? Is it to appear broadminded? Is it a way for the speaker to acknowledge that there is more than one way of looking at a subject? Is it a form of CYA? When the coach is asked if Joe Rightarm is going to be able to start in Sunday's game, he might answer by saying, "Well, I'm no doctor, but that being said, Joe tore his right rebusfram just anterior to the plexus nubulai. This injury takes 17 days to heal with intensive therapy, so no, Joe will not be starting." Why did he have to remind us he's not a doctor? Is it really necessary to qualify what we say like that? Does it really clarify anything, or is it just meaningless jabber?

Another one that grinds my teeth is, "Do you know what I'm saying?" If we're both speaking English, it can pretty much be assumed that I know what he's saying, so what is the real purpose of this phrase? Is it to invite agreement, or to verify that I'm still listening, or solicit feedback? Who knows, but it really bugs me; you know what I'm saying?

And just WHO is inventing all these useless phrases? Who knows, but it's the media that spread them around, so I'll blame them for the widespread use of this gibberish. I'm sure that will put a stop to it!

I have no idea if that now-dead Dubai Ports World deal was a good thing for our country or an accident waiting to happen, but I do know that our leaders acted atrociously in the decision-making process, and that's never a good thing.

Rather than examine the merits of the deal, politicians on both sides of the aisle were quick to jump to conclusions – some strongly pro Dubai, and some strongly anti. We got both sides claiming the other side was playing politics with national security, and both sides staked their claim to being toughest on terrorism.

What we did not get is a calm examination of the pros and cons. It is altogether possible that the deal would have reaped tremendous benefits for us, encouraging a needed friend in the region and building a long-term bridge to the area. It's also possible that it would have put American ports at greater risk from infiltrators and others who mean us harm. We will never know which argument would have carried the day, because we never got that far. Instead, our leaders put their fingers in the air, felt which way the political winds were blowing, and followed the crowd. Political polls drove this important decision, not reasoned information gathering. Too bad. In this dangerous time, we simply cannot afford to make decisions like that. We have to think, not just feel. We certainly could not run our foundry based on the emotions, prejudices, and ungrounded opinions of our corporate decision makers. We need facts and information to make good business decisions, and I'm sure it's no different in the halls of Congress than it is in our boardroom in Oakland.

Where is our democracy headed? Will the media control the story and, therefore, the decisions we make? Will politicians make good decisions based on what is best for us, or what is most popular at the time? Harry Truman was quite unpopular in his day because of some of the decisions he made, but was shown in the light of history to be one of our best presidents. He did not take polls before making decisions. Maybe our current crop of leaders could learn a thing or two from Harry.

"Sheriff" Gregg Carr Continues Education Efforts

AB&I's Gregg Carr has spent the last 18 months calling on engineers and designers with a single goal: to educate them to the advantages of using American-made cast iron pipe and fittings in their DWV applications. Gregg wants to make sure that everybody knows that not all cast iron DWV material is equal, and not all meets the industry standards for safety and reliability.

Gregg takes his job very seriously, so seriously, in fact, that his fellow AB&I team members have dubbed him "The Sheriff."

Gregg sees his role as rooting out substandard imported materials from construction sites, and making sure that all engineers and designers come to understand that there is a difference in cast iron DWV.

"Some of the engineers I call on haven't yet heard that some cast iron materials



"Sheriff" Gregg Carr welcomes Jerry Sampson of Delco Sales to his "posse" of AB&I team members and others educating area engineers and designers about the advantages of specifying cast iron DWV made in America.

not made in the USA don't meet our standards," said Carr. Others are very aware of the potential for problems when some brands of cast iron pipe and fittings are used. Dean Cook, president of the LA Chapter of ASPE, for example, is fully up-to-speed on the issue. Says Cook, "I contacted several inspectors concerning this small problem, and found it is not a *small* problem at all!"

Gregg aims to have all engineers and designers know about the differences in cast iron DWV brands, and to have all specifications updated to keep substandard imported materials off the jobsite. For Carr, keeping these materials out of our new buildings is not just a job, it's a calling. After all, we'd want nothing less from the Sheriff.

See You at PWDA!

Don't forget to visit us at the upcoming Annual PWDA Convention at the Westin Kierland in Scottsdale. It will be a great time to visit with colleagues, and AB&I will be on hand to answer questions about our line of cast iron DWV products, including pipe, fittings, and couplings.



The PWDA Convention will be held from May 18-21, a great time of year in Scottsdale. To register, contact the PWDA at 800-752-8833.

New Packaging Touts Recycling

AB&I's newest fittings packaging features the triangle of arrows that has become the international symbol for recycling. This new packaging was designed to highlight the fact that AB&I products are made from recycled cast iron.

"Many people don't realize what a huge recycler AB&I truly is," said Gary Wickham, AB&I's director of marketing. Thousands of tons of scrap iron are recycled through the AB&I melting furnace to produce the pipe and fittings that carry the AB&I logo. In addition to the scrap iron that gets recycled, virtually all paper and other materials used by AB&I gets recycled in some manner.



Wixson Speaks to Foundry Group

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1.5 million people in 1906 to 35 million people today," said Wixson. "If we didn't change," he said, "we would not be here today." Innovation has played a key role at AB&I. Harkening back to the Boscacci genes, Wixson noted that Arnie Boscacci never stopped thinking of ways to do things better.

"We were the first foundry in the 1950's to produce eight and ten foot pipe lengths in one mold. We were also the first to produce two pipes in one spinning machine, then the first to produce three. "And that commitment to innovation did not change under Allan's [Boscacci] leadership. From six Disamatics (molding machines), to innovative pattern making, to automatic pouring, automated grinding, and dipping and printing of pipe - the innovations are too numerous to mention," said Wixson.

Wixson was quick to point out, however, that the success of AB&I has been a team effort. "All the optimism, flexibility, and innovation in the world doesn't work unless you have our secret ingredient - our

people, our team."

"Optimism doesn't work," said Wixson, "unless your people say 'I believe.' Flexibility doesn't work unless the people are willing to do it a different way. And innovation doesn't work unless people keep on trying, even when a lot of hard work fails."

"Under the most trying conditions, the only question was, not will we survive, but what will we do to survive?"

The bottom line as to how AB&I has survived and prospered for 100 years is teamwork, creating optimism, flexibility, and innovation. "Teamwork is the soul of AB&I," said Wixson. "It is not something that just happens; you have to work at it every day."

Just for Fun...

A Leprechaun Walks Into This Bar...



McCarthy walked into a bar and ordered martini after martini, each time removing the olives and placing them in a jar. When the jar was filled with olives and all the drinks consumed, he started to leave. "Excuse me," said a customer, who was puzzled over what McCarthy had done. "What was that all about?" "Nothing," he replied, "my wife just sent me out for a jar of olives."

On Saint Patrick's Day, an Irishman who had a little too much to drink was driving home from the city and his car was weaving violently all over the road. A cop pulled him over.

"So," said the cop to the driver, "Where have you been?"

"Why, I've been to the pub of course," slurs the drunk.

"Well," says the cop, "it looks like you've had quite a few to drink this evening."

"I did all right," the drunk says with a smile.

"Did you know," says the cop, standing straight and folding his arms across his chest, "that a few intersections back, your wife fell out of your car?"

"Oh, thank heavens," sighs the drunk. "For a minute there, I thought I'd gone deaf."

An Irish priest and a Rabbi get into a car accident. They both get out of their cars and stumble over to the side of the road. The Rabbi says, "Oy vey! What a wreck!" The priest asks him, "Are you all right, Rabbi?" The Rabbi responds, "Just a little shaken."

The priest pulls a flask of whiskey from his coat and says, "Here, drink some of this it will calm your nerves." The Rabbi takes the flask and drinks it down and says, "Well, what are we going to tell the police?"

"Well," the priest says, "I don't know what your aft' to be tellin' them. But I'll be tellin' them I wasn't the one drinkin'."

A man stumbles up to the only other patron in a bar and asks if he could buy him a drink.

"Why of course," comes the reply.

The first man then asks: "Where are you from?"

"I'm from Ireland," replies the second man.

The first man responds: "You don't say, I'm from Ireland too! Let's have another round to Ireland."

"Of course," replies the second man.

Curious, the first man then asks: "Where in Ireland are you from?"

"Dublin," comes the reply.

"I can't believe it," says the first man. "I'm from Dublin too! Let's have another drink to Dublin."

"Of course," replies the second man.

Curiosity again strikes and the first man asks: "What school did you go to?"

"Saint Mary's," replies the second man. "I graduated in '62."

"This is unbelievable!" the first man says. "I went to Saint Mary's and I graduated in '62, too!"

About that time in comes one of the regulars and sits down at the bar.

"What's been going on?" he asks the bartender.

"Nothing much," replies the bartender. "The O'Malley twins are drunk again."

