

Mascari keeps focus on service during challenging times

Demand remains strong for aftermarket service on essential equipment. By **DJ Slater**

A tough marketplace isn't new territory for Danny Mascari, president of L.A. Turbine. He recalls the most recent downturn (2015-2016) in the natural gas industry well. While many lessons come from such struggles, there's one key takeaway that Mascari never forgets – what are the best ways to serve our customers?

It's a question Mascari always asks himself, especially now as a global pandemic continues to impact companies and professionals across all industries. The answers usually come in the form of enhancements to L.A. Turbine's service capabilities and keeping relationships vibrant.

COMPRESSORTECH² spoke with Mascari about the company's latest turboexpander, its approach to service and how it endures amidst a downturn paired with a pandemic.

L.A. TURBINE HAS HAD A BUSY STRETCH IN RECENT YEARS, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE LAUNCH OF THE ARES AMB TURBOEXPANDER COMPRESSOR. HOW HAS ARES BEEN RECEIVED SINCE ITS LAUNCH NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO?

It has been a pretty busy stretch and by all accounts, Ares has been a success. We have quite a few machines that we've sold, built and commissioned that are running at NGL plants throughout the U.S. And, now we are at the proof of success phase gathering data about Ares OPEX and CAPEX performance within plant sites. People in the industry are talking about it and seeing the benefits of it. The new AMB on-skid controller technology for turboexpanders fits into so many different applications. We are now seeing Ares positioned for future growth in applications such as LNG and petrochemical. Even more promising, our customers domestically and internationally are looking at their current

technology and wondering if it would work for their operations.

HOW HAS L.A. TURBINE BEEN IMPACTED BY OUR CURRENT MARKETPLACE?

This is the second downturn I've experienced. I go back to 2015-2016 and we're seeing common things happening (sans a global pandemic). Budgets are reduced or cut. Both new projects and existing orders are paused or delayed. The complication with COVID-19 is it presents an extra layer to servicing our customers. Our first line of defense has and is 24/7 phone support via our FX-Turbo number (+1 855 FX-TURBO). It's low tech, simple and it works. We know how tough it is if equipment goes down, so a quick response is crucial. We've created very good partnerships with our customers so troubleshooting via the phone is a very effective support method. Then this March, we saw more social distancing, limits on movements and flights being restricted. Fortunately, we have technicians positioned throughout the United States who can drive to sites to perform maintenance and service checks on equipment. In addition, for the safety and health of our team members, they are following new protocols as well as abiding by those at customer sites. In the event we can't get to their site, we've embraced high-tech solutions to deliver face-to-face support.

HOW DOES THE CURRENT MARKETPLACE IMPACT THE DEMAND FOR TURBOEXPANDERS?

Demand has come to a pause. There is a lot of uncertainty. That's the theme across many industries. What does the next year, five years, 10 years look like? The demand we're seeing now is for the help of L.A. Turbine's FX-Turbo aftermarket services

team. There are three important aspects to our aftermarket service team support – maintenance, optimization and education. Maintenance is simple. You have customers with turboexpanders in hydrocarbon processing, energy recovery and industrial gas that need machines to continuously run. As an essential service provider, our FX-Turbo team is there to help them. Then you have optimization. You have customers with diminishing budgets that wonder how they can squeeze more out of less. They can't increase their plant size or equipment. So how can they redesign their equipment to get more efficiency out of it? That's a sweet spot for LAT because we've been working with all makes and models of turboexpander equipment since 2003. Finally, education is also an important element. We're seeing an increase in the demand for education, especially within the natural gas industry. You have a changing of the guard in the industry. Before COVID-19, new plants were coming online, yet there was a shortage of

L.A. Turbine commissioned its first ARES AMB turboexpander-compressor at an NGL plant in North Dakota.





During the pandemic, Mascari said L.A. Turbine has focused on improving its service capabilities.

trained personnel to staff them. Many of the operators are green going into sites with no idea what a natural gas processing plant is, let alone know what a turboexpander is and what it does. We have the tools for that training.

HOW DOES THE TRAINING ASPECT WORK?

We have formal and informal ways to train end users. Prior to releasing a turboexpander, we test it with the full package. In many cases, the customer will fly to our shop and witness the testing of the equipment in a controlled environment. They receive hands-on training surrounded by the people who designed and built their machine. The second informal way is once the turboexpander

arrives onsite, the client shadows our field technicians to see how the machine is set up. They learn about the mechanical connections and how a monitoring and control system operates. With formal training, we have three deployment options. The first involves a LAT field service technician going to a customer's site and conducting multi-day training, based on personnel experience and need. The second option is for customers to attend training at LAT's headquarters and the third option is digital training, where we use video conferencing tools to train.

HOW DO YOU KEEP THE COMPANY VIBRANT IN CHALLENGING TIMES LIKE THESE?

Regardless of the times, we continually ask ourselves this question. You look at what is most important – what's our focus and how can we best deliver our product and service to the customer? It always goes back to service. Right now, especially in a downturn, it's about keeping people safe and plants going. Like any business, you put people in a position to succeed. Arm them with knowledge and provide them with the proper tools and support they need to serve our customers' needs as quickly, reliably and effectively as possible.

DO YOU THINK THE PANDEMIC WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR MORE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TO HAVE A STRONGER PRESENCE IN THE MARKETPLACE?

There's no doubt the pandemic has raised awareness and, in many cases, accelerated the adoption of more advanced technologies, such as augmented and virtual reality, in all industries. As with any new technology, people need to be educated, understand the benefits and improvements the change will bring about and finally feel confident it will work. The adoption rate of our Ares AMB turboexpander technology by our customers was somewhat similar. At first, customers were resistant to the idea due to inexperience and preconceived notions about the technology, plus they thought why make a change when the old approach still worked? Once there was a greater understanding of the technology and the benefits it provides, the hurdle was removed. Augmented and virtual reality will be a part of the industry going forward yet it has to be the right fit.

In some cases, there's no replacement for having a person on site for troubleshooting and repairing issues. **CT2**



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President, L.A. Turbine

