



CHOOSING THE RIGHT SERVICE PROVIDER — A CRITICAL PART OF CHOOSING THE RIGHT COMPRESSOR

By David Andrews



Photo courtesy of Brabazon Pump, Compressor and Vacuum



Photo courtesy of Comairco



Photo courtesy of Blake & Pendleton

What's the best compressor for your operation?

If you're like many, you may respond to that question with the size of your compressor – a 100 hp unit! Or perhaps with the compressor type: rotary screw, piston or maybe even centrifugal. And some may answer based upon the air quality needed, such as oil free. If you're in construction you may say a 185, or a 1600 or a high-pressure unit.

And while all these answers are correct, we often forget the most important way to describe the best compressor for your operation.

A working compressor.

Compressors are a vital part of your operation. It drives processes. It activates machinery. It moves ingredients.

It drills. It blasts. It keeps your employees working doing what you pay them to do!

Most understand the cost to own and operate a compressor. The purchase price. The cost of electricity to operate the unit. Service parts including filters and lubricants. While there are different calculations, a frequently cited source from compressedairchallenge.org indicates over the course of 10 years the total costs break down into 12% for equipment; 12% for maintenance; and 76% for electricity.

What about the costs if your compressor is not operating?

Planned maintenance and scheduled downtime is a regular part of most business operations. It helps ensure your

equipment continues to operate at peak performance. And, because it is planned, you can take steps to reallocate your resources and employees to other jobs.

But when a compressor stops working unexpectedly it can have significant impact on your operations. Some may be minor inconveniences - like workers with more time on their hands finding the good coffee stash. But more often than not compressor downtime causes major disruptions to your business.

While simple calculations may not exist to determine the cost of an unplanned outage, some things to consider:

- What is the value of production per hour on lines requiring compressed air for operation?
- How much does it cost to pay employees per hour? How much is their productivity impacted with a disruption to the compressed air supply?
- Will slowed or stopped production lines impact your ability to make on-time shipments to your customers?
- The more you consider the importance of compressors to your overall operations, the more important it is to have a plan in place to help ensure maximum uptime!

A major part of that plan should be your compressor service provider. CompressedAirChallenge.org provides guidelines to help select the right partner for your business.

Allen King, President of Blake & Pendleton, a large independent distributor covering the Southeastern area of the United States, emphasizes, "First and foremost, it's all about service after the sale. A good service partner needs to have the ability to react quickly to an issue and have trained technicians available to get a customer back up and running quickly."

Reinforcing the guidelines presented by The Compressed Air Challenge, King emphasizes the importance of a total systems view as part of the plan. "It's important to look at the entire compressed air system and evaluate how the air is being used and how the various components affect overall performance." Correct controller setups help ensure system uptime.

And, in the event an emergency does occur, Blake & Pendleton emphasizes its ability to quickly dispatch technicians who are located throughout its territory. Plus, a robust warehousing and stocking program makes access to the right spare parts and supplies more efficient.

Timeliness is a key aspect to service confirms Brad Bonnacaze, President of independent distributor Sullair of Houston. "Our goal is to get the customer back up and running as quickly as possible," according to Bonnacaze. As part of its solution, Sullair of Houston has an extensive inventory of rental compressors which can quickly be mobilized while a customer's primary compressor is being repaired or replaced.

Mike Stone, General Manager of Comairco, an independent distributor covering Canada and the northeast United States notes their commitment to solving problems. "Our customers recognize we have a commitment to solving customer issues, not just changing parts," Stone says. This commitment extends throughout the Comairco business model including creative containerized solutions allowing customers to place compressors outside, freeing up indoor space for other business operations.

And, like having a trusted mechanic for your car, the right compressor service provider can not only provide regular service but also help to prevent future issues. "When we sell a service contract, we focus not just on the preventive maintenance, but also on predictive maintenance," according to Frank Coglianesse, Area Sales Manager for Brabazon Pump, Compressor & Vacuum, a large independent distributor servicing the US midwest. "We do things on a service call like vibration analysis, oil sampling, thermal imaging – to catch something before it becomes an issue. These actions help maximize uptime and reduce the chances of a compressor going down."

When deciding on the right compressor choice for your operation, make sure to consider the right compressor service choice as well.

Because while nobody plans an emergency, we all should have an emergency plan. And the right compressor service partner can make all the difference if an unplanned shutdown hits your facility.

What's the best compressor for your operation? A working compressor, of course. But so, too, is having the right compressor service partner in case you run into an unplanned shutdown.