

Different Market, New Opportunities

By Jeff Roseman

The introduction of the Commercial Certified Water Specialist program at the WQA Aquatech USA tradeshow this year should open up new opportunities for water dealers. The residential market has been a tough road and competition has been stiff with the downturn in the economy. Dealers need to learn more about larger systems, specialized applications and diverse water sources in order to capitalize in this market.

How one dealer brought a small commercial system back to life

Small commercial and large industrial systems can prove to be very lucrative if the units are installed correctly and maintained properly. These water treatment systems involve more math, physics, chemistry and engineering for a dealer to be successful and competitive.

The following article describes what one water treatment company did to bring a small commercial system back to life after it sat idle for many months. This application is just one way dealers can increase the bottom line in a tight economic market and help generate sales and income in arenas that are not being pursued by many water treatment companies.

Get the Account

When calling on customers in the commercial or industrial sector, one must realize that this market is very lucrative but also understand that these accounts can be political and often require bids. Schools, nursing homes, office buildings, factories, food processors and other institutions generally need several prices and will choose the best option. Remember that they have a problem and are looking for a solution, but they also must be cost effective and practical for their application and water source.

Be prepared to offer options and alternatives that differentiate or set your company apart from your competitors. Your bid may not be the highest or lowest, but if you offer

a better, more appropriate solution than your competitors, the job might be awarded to your company.

In a market where the bottom line is often seen only by accountants and CEOs, you must help the maintenance personnel sell your product and company. Make sure they understand the equipment you will use, the warranty, the service and why your company is better than the competition. Get the account and service the products sold, thus establishing a rapport with the customer in order to generate residual service and product sales.

Flushing Out the System

After sitting idle for many months, a small commercial unit needed to be brought back to life. The system was a twin 210,000-grain unit with a Fleck 2900 NT valve set up as a System 6 configuration. It was designed to utilize the second tank if flow rates exceeded the initial volume specified. The new application only required a flow rate of 40 gpm, but it needed to provide continuous soft water, so Aqua Ion Plus+ Technologies, a water treatment company located in La Porte, Ind., needed to change the system from a System 6 to a System 7 configuration, which was attainable because of the NT electronic valve.

After assessing the situation and conducting a proper water test to determine present contaminants, it was determined that the unit did not need to be rebed, but rather cleaned up and flushed with acid because of the amount of iron that was present in the unit.

Aqua Ion Plus+ backwashed both tanks until the water was clear and then manually backwashed the system



Because of the amount of iron present, the unit needed to be flushed with acid. Aqua Ion Plus+ backwashed both tanks until the water was clear.



The unit had to be set up as a twin system with a System 9 configuration, allowing for a 40 gpm flow rate and continuous soft water.

with an acid-laden brine solution. The backwash cycle was interrupted and allowed to sit for several hours before it continued.

The backwash cycle was performed twice to each tank over a period of a couple days. The backwash was clear and once the system reset, the water was tested for softness and iron bleed-through. Both tests revealed very acceptable effluent water.

There were, however, problems found with the setup of this system. First, the programming was not set up properly to allow enough backwash time. There also was not enough brine refill time to allow for the proper salt dosage for the problem water. Another quandary was the fact that no grid was present in the brine tank. This may not be a big issue to some dealers, but when you understand the physics and chemistry behind a good brine solution, you will never forego a grid system in any brine tank again, no matter what the added cost. (See "Designing Systems," page 12.)

The final issue to overcome was setting the NT system as a twin system. This particular unit had to be set up with a System 9 configuration because there were two meters rather than one remote meter. This setup will allow for the 40 gpm flow rate and continuous soft water, as it keeps one unit online and the other in standby. The implementation of the

NT electronics made the unit much more versatile. If it were not for the valve, the unit would not have been as easy to change from one configuration to another.

These are all examples of options that must be discussed when presenting a bid to maintenance personnel. This type of versatility will differentiate the costs of various treatment systems.

In Closing

This twin system came back to life very nicely. Sometimes a treatment system may need total replacement or maybe just be rebid and refurbished. Do a proper assessment of the customer's needs, the application and a thorough water test to determine which avenues must be taken to keep costs low and efficiency high. Remember that these larger systems offer residual service accounts. They are also more

lucrative, but require more time for bidding, design and engineering.

The Commercial Certified Water Specialist should be pursued to help in designing these systems properly. Be sure to utilize the expertise of your supplier's engineering staff. Test the water carefully for contaminants and take the time to understand the application.

The water treatment system is implemented to provide a solution to a problem, not just an avenue to sell product. This market is more delicate because the consumer has more to lose when the system does not work properly. A contingency or backup system is highly suggested because downtime can be costly. *wqp*

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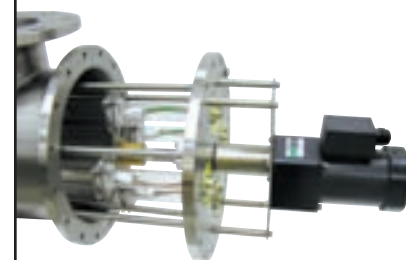
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