OLEUMTECH CORPORATION

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WIRELESS SOLUTIONS REVOLUTIONIZE OIL & GAS MEASUREMENT

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"We provide patented wired and wireless level sensors along with I/O solutions that extend our machine-to-machine (M2M) communication offering. For our customers, we provide free technical support, application engineering and even on-site installation supervision," adds Chief Operating Officer, Vrej Isa.

OleumTech was founded in 2000. "When the company first began, its mission was to enable a wireless digital oilfield. The original team of less than ten people consisted of sales and product development engineers that helped define the wireless applications for the upstream oil and gas industry," recalls Isa, one of the founding members. The ISO 9001 certified company has now grown to seventy employees and has customers around the world.

OleumTech's products have shaken up the measurement process in the oil and gas sector—in a positive way. The traditional way to monitor storage tank levels, pipe and wellhead pressures or assorted measurements such as flow or temperature, was to track the data manually. Then came hardwired monitoring instrumentation. The advantages to OleumTech's wireless technology are many. As there is no need to dig trenches to run wires, acquiring permits is no longer needed, and time and money are saved on installation. "The OleumTech wireless sensor network is highly scalable and enables new end nodes to be deployed with ease," says Isa. The company has patents on all of its wireless and sensor technologies, he adds.

The company has eagerly embraced the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) concept in which machines are connected to computers that interpret, analyze and make decisions almost instantly, based on sensor data from many widely distributed sources. OleumTech allows IIoT sensor information to be correlated and acted upon either on the edge or in the cloud. ▸▸

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OleumTech®, of Foothill Ranch, California, offers innovative wireless solutions for industrial systems involving process monitoring and control applications. The firm's products—designed and manufactured in the United States—have radically transformed how oil and gas companies make measurements in the field. Proprietary wireless technology, designed to automate and reduce the cost of industrial measurement and monitoring, is one of the keys to the company's success.

"Not having to install a hardwired system meant that there was no interruption to work at the site; all wells were running during the installation."

Wireless sensor networks creating an Industrial Internet of Things allow real-time decisions to be made with up-to-date information. OleumTech is the leading provider of wireless sensors and transmitters, having installed more than 300,000 nodes and 30,000 networks. Isa adds that the company plans to continue its expansion of nodes and networks.

The company's in-house research and development department has developed a cutting-edge system of flexible resistive level sensors to measure the levels of liquid in fuel storage tanks. This is the world's first such sensor to give a reading of three variables—the product (oil), the interface (water) and temperature levels—all from a single sensor that can be either hardwired or connected to a wireless system. The sensor is so flexible, it can be coiled into a twenty-four-inch diameter, so that it can be easily transported and fitted. Since the sensor's electronics cannot create a spark, the device is intrinsically safe and, therefore, suitable for Class I, Division 1 hazardous locations.

Such equipment has proven popular among energy sector companies. OleumTech counts many oil and gas firms as clients including Shell, Occidental Petroleum Corporation, Devon, Anadarko, Encana, Pioneer, Bill Barrett, Apache, EQT, Williams, WPX, Laredo, and Pinnacle just to name a few in no particular order.

OleumTech also does work in the water/wastewater industry and is definitely looking to expand this area, according to Isa. "The robust hardware solutions that we offer for the oil and gas sector are very compatible with the water/wastewater industry and for other industrial automation applications, which requires field-proven, secure, hardened nodes and data aggregation solutions. We are also very excited to introduce new products very soon that will accommodate the general purpose automation and M2M market."

Isa cites a noteworthy venture with Synergy Resources Corporation of Denver, Colorado as an example of the company's capabilities. "We recently automated one of the oilfields for Synergy Resources Corporation as a pilot project. In less than a day, we helped automate fourteen storage tanks and eleven wellheads. We not only installed all the equipment, we had live data streaming into their SCADA system." A Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system is a computerized industrial network that gathers data from sensors in a factory, plant or other facility.

Not having to install a hardwired system meant that there was no interruption to work at the site; all wells were running during the installation. Doing it this way saved the project operator a minimum of $30,000, Isa adds. The project was completed by one OleumTech application engineer with a crew of four technicians.

Having the right people is vital to the success of projects like the one at Synergy. "Being a small company, we look for high-energy, high-performance individuals who can wear many different hats, solving difficult challenges, allowing us to grow together as a family. We are offering extensive, rigorous one-on-one training and coaching to provide a great stage to perform." This approach has clearly paid off, as OleumTech was recently voted one of the best places to work in Orange County, California.

"We have a very flexible, open-minded culture at OleumTech where we respect each other's talents and differences. Every member has high expectations for themselves and others so we are very results-driven. The company offers free medical benefits to it employees and profit sharing," notes Isa.

The firm likes to establish long-term relationships with its suppliers. "We remain very loyal to our suppliers, as we are to our employees. We believe relationships in business are crucial as they are in our personal lives. We work very closely with our suppliers managing quality, cost, and inventory."

OleumTech is also gaining recognition as a company to watch. "We are one of the finalists for 2016 Orange County High-Tech Award … as our company grows and expands into other sectors, we plan to engage in more awards and [public relations] activities," says Isa.

Ironically, given the high-tech nature of what the company does, Isa says "our best form of promotion has been through word-of-mouth. We are very active in social media and communicating via email announcements. We are also very involved in trade shows and education-based events, primarily in the oil and gas industry."

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At present, oil and gas prices are low, a situation that presents challenges to all companies involved in the energy sector. "Right now with oil prices where they are, producers have had no choice but to make financial and operational adjustments, but they understand the importance of automating and monitoring their assets for both immediate and long-term operational and economic impact. We continue to help overcome difficult challenges for our customers with high-value, low-maintenance and creative application solutions," says Isa.

In the fast-changing technology world, programs, sensors and software can become outdated very quickly. As OleumTech continues to grow, Isa says the company keeps itself innovative by refusing to imitate others. "That's one of the things we pride ourselves on. We don't try to duplicate any product that's already in the marketplace," he states, adding that the company often gets ideas and inspiration from customers.

As for the future, he foresees continued growth in the oil and gas sector and other industrial automation markets, particularly related to the Industrial Internet of Things.

"The past sixteen years of our endeavor has revolutionized the way oil and gas production locations are automated using robust, reliable and safe wireless sensing technology. We will take our domain knowledge and expertise to other industrial and general purpose automation markets including the IIoT segment to help organizations create a more efficient, reliable, safe, and cost-effective data infrastructure," states Isa. ■

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