



# Easier for Engineering

*Taco introduces innovative software and products for engineered systems.*

*A Taco employee assembles a commercial pump. The company has introduced 120 commercial pump models in the last five years.*

By Bob Miodonski

**T**aco has been busy during the lull that has beset the nonresidential construction market in recent years. The company has been investing in technology and software that makes its systems more attractive to specifying engineers and mechanical contractors. Taco is counting on the fact that when the upswing arrives the key issues facing these customers will be the ease of a system's design and installation as well as its energy efficiency.

Leading the way has been Taco's LoadMatch single-pipe hydronic system for heating and cooling commercial buildings. Complementing LoadMatch is Taco's Hydronic Systems Solution software, or HSS, that allows engineers to lay out a building's heating and cooling systems quickly and, not coincidentally, using Taco's LoadMatch.

Supporting Taco's bold initiative into nonresidential construction has been its Heat Transfer and Commercial Pump divisions. The latter grew largely from Taco's acquisition of Canadian pump manufacturer Arthur S. Leitch Co. in 1996.

"Our commercial and industrial growth is going to be high," says Tom Lawrence, Taco's senior

vice president of sales and marketing. "We have 125 models of commercial pumps as well as innovative industrial products coming out of our Fall River plant.

"We've included the design engineers in our strategy. We want the commercial business to have the same strength and market share as the residential side of the business."

Bobby Lee, senior vice president of the Heat Transfer Division in Fall River, Mass., adds: "The percentage of Taco's commercial business vs. residential is stronger than what it was five years ago. We're a very serious player in commercial."

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## **Game, set, LoadMatch**

Taco has become a player by offering innovation solutions and design tools, including LoadMatch and Hydronic Systems Solution.

"LoadMatch and HSS software are bringing tremendous advancement to system design and system selection," Taco President John H. White Jr. says.

LoadMatch piping systems have been specified and installed in the United States and Canada since the late 1990s in new construction and retrofits. Facilities include hospitals, hotels, schools, office buildings, and industrial plants.

Taco's LoadMatch system replaces all-air HVAC

systems and the typical two-pipe hydronic system with a one-pipe system comprised of LoadMatch circulators and any type of hydronic terminal unit. LoadMatch eliminates the need for most balancing valves and energy-consuming control valves by replacing them with small, energy-efficient circulators. LoadMatch circulators direct water to where it needs to go, as opposed to forcing the water through the system's piping loop, says Tim Smith, manager of marketing programs.

"LoadMatch's single-pipe design distributes pumping horsepower all over the building; it puts a pump wherever you need the water," he says. "Nine out of 10 jobs go in with air systems only, yet hydronics is the most efficient way to move BTU through a building."

LoadMatch achieves additional savings on money that otherwise would be spent on pipe and fittings. Taco estimates that LoadMatch can typically save up to 30 percent of life-cycle costs.

HVAC Solution developed HSS in association with Van Boerum & Frank Associates, a design firm in Salt Lake City. Once Taco became the exclusive licensee of the hydronic version of the software, it quickly integrated all LoadMatch equipment parts into the software's program.

Ben Davis, the project engineer behind the software's development, describes HSS as "intuitive" from the design engineer's perspective, employing symbols in a schematic layout that look just like the actual equipment being specified. HSS allows designers to cut system design in half, eliminate calculation errors and make system changes in minutes.

"It really works the way an engineer thinks," Davis says.

### Building the Taco brand

Appealing to specifying engineers is one component of Taco's strategy to increase its presence in the commercial sector, says Bob Flynn, senior vice president for corporate development. LoadMatch and HSS have played big roles in that.

"We are repositioning our sales efforts to specifying engineers," he says. "We get in front of engineers as early as possible.

"Our message is that we are a technology leader. We're much more than a circulator company. We provide energy efficient, competitively priced systems."

For the last three years, Taco has conducted a customer visit program. From May to September, the company has hosted 80 to 100 engineers along with the appropriate manufacturers reps. The program starts on a Thursday afternoon and concludes the following Sunday. Besides visits to the plant and headquarters in Cranston, engineers

get to see other sights in Rhode Island, such as Newport.

"We play a much better home game than we do away," Smith says. "If we can show people what we do and get them to meet Johnny White, we can establish relationships that way."

Another way that Taco has been building its brand in the commercial market has been through its systems-based approach. Bigger commercial pumps and innovative products from Cranston and Fall River support the systems approach.

"We have introduced 120 new pump models and extremely full pump lines in the last five years," says Joe Gaul, senior vice president for the Commercial Pump Division. "The growth we've had has been the exciting part of it. Johnny has never said no to me while I've been here. He's not writing any blank checks, but everything that I've asked him to do he has signed off on."

Even in a slow nonresidential construction market, Taco has been able to gain market share by introducing commercial pump models and providing excellent customer service, Gaul says.

"We can bid on larger products now. We have everything that a customer needs for a project, including more spec products. We're trying to sell a philosophy and a systems approach. We go in there to save energy costs."

Another way to build brand loyalty is through customer service, Gaul says.

"How well we service people is what it boils down to, and we're gaining advantage there," he says. "We're there when you need us. If a customer has a seal blow on a pump, we'll have the product down to shipping in an hour.

"Johnny is spending a lot of money on the new pump line. He's made the commitment to being a customer service company."

*The Commercial Pump Division has restructured its manufacturing operation to improve its customer service.*

