

PWNA Vendor Profile



Big Enough to Deliver, Small Enough to Care

Written by Allison Hester,
Sponsored by Power Washers of North America

Since 1999, Hydro Tek has supported the Power Washers of North America as a vendor, helping sponsor events and exhibiting and demonstrating their equipment, and recently giving away skid units at the annual conventions. (See sidebar.) “We like the PWNA and support them because it’s for the end user – the contractor who is out there using the equipment every day,” explained Hydro Tek Marketing Director Casey Meelker. “The PWNA provides these contractors with education and a brotherhood of sorts to talk about ideas and solve problems together. We really support that.”

And PWNA members love Hydro Tek as well. “When we go to PWNA shows, we get the opportunity to meet so many people who own Hydro Tek,” Meelker added. “They really like the equipment.”

That is largely because Hydro Tek’s equipment is designed with the contractor in mind – stainless steel, high quality components, and built from contractor feedback. “The main reason we support PWNA is that we know the equipment we build stands up and it helps the contractor who is using it every day. They need something that’s dependable because they can’t afford a breakdown. Our equipment stands up to that test.”

The Hydro Tek Philosophy

It’s a principle that Founder and President John Koen has implemented since starting Hydro Tek back in 1985. Koen had worked part time for a high-pressure pumping systems



2012 PWNA Convention’s Hydro Tek skid giveaway winner Charles Puglusi (third from left) of Absolute Fleet Wash, Riverhead, New York. Also shown are Hydro Tek Regional Managers Bob Gruetzmacher (left) and Marv Gerdes (right), with ACR Products owner Tom Vogel.

company, but felt there was a better way to design and make pressure washers. He started the company and was responsible for all aspects of the company: engineering, manufacturing, marketing and sales. The company began to grow – primarily in southern California at first, but later spread to distributors across America. Today, Hydro Tek equipment is sold and used around the world.

Koen’s philosophy from day one was this: if you focus on quality and reliability from the very beginning, you will develop equipment that lasts longer than the competition’s, help the end users do their jobs better, and build customer satisfaction.

And it’s a philosophy he still practices today.

“John (Koen) is still very involved with the business, coming in every day and staying involved in our day-to-day operations to ensure our company’s growth,” Meelker explained. “I think that’s important to a lot of our customers. It’s nice for end users to know the owner is still very interested in helping people.”

Hydro Tek also now employs around 60 staff members, each one of whom has a share in the company’s success. Meelker added, “That really plays into peer accountability, helping us reduce waste and maximize accountability.”

Several Hydro Tek team members get together for a monthly meeting to discuss how

In 2008, Hydro Tek moved into its 40,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility.

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to improve current products or improve what it already designed. “We get ideas directly from our customers,” Meelker said. “If they call in with an idea or suggestion, we put them on an idea board, then discuss the ideas at our meetings.”

The team also takes every customer very seriously, according to Meelker. “If someone has an issue or a problem, we want to take care of that right away. John has instilled this into us because he wants to make sure every customer is satisfied.”

These types of concepts helped Hydro Tek achieve its ISO 9001: 2008 world-class quality certification in 2011, which is required by many foreign markets to ensure quality. “It’s not an easy thing to do. We are audited every year by an independent agency to make sure we’re handling everything correctly, measuring customer satisfaction, and meeting other certification requirements,” Meelker explained.

Constant and Continuous Improvement

Another of the Hydro Tek team’s guiding principles is constant and continuous improvement. One way they achieve this is to have a team of professional contractors, such as Jim Lewis of Underpressure Powerwashers, Inc. (see this month’s cover story), test equipment prototypes prior to releasing it on the market.

“These contractors take our products out on a few jobs to let us know what works, what doesn’t work, what needs to be tweaked, and how we can make it better,” Meelker explained. “It’s the best way to get honest feedback. So by the time it hits the market, it’s already been used by contractors and adjusted based on their feedback.”

Taking all these things into consideration, Hydro Tek has recently introduced two new surface cleaners onto the market. “Our surface cleaners have always been very popular with the contractors. You can clean concrete at least 10 times faster with a surface cleaner than with a wand,” said Meelker.

At the end of 2012, Hydro Tek did a “complete redesign” of their surface cleaners, applying contractor feedback into the changes. For one, there had been a splash coming out the bottom that was hitting the areas along the side and getting the operator wet. “We took that feedback and added a brush along the back so there’s no backsplash,” Meelker added.

They also redesigned the three-in-one contractor



Hydro Tek demonstrations at the 2012 PWNA Annual Convention



Twister, a surface cleaner with a water broom spray bar that could

be used for rinsing and for gum removal. At the recommendation of contractors, the new version has an edging nozzle to help users when they have to clean alongside walls. “We added this feature, changed the look of it, and were able to get it out without increasing the price.”

The other surface cleaner Hydro Tek redesigned for 2013 is the vacuum surface cleaner, which used to have an 18-inch cleaning path. “We have a new piece of equipment that we’re able to use to roll the vacuum tube. This has resulted in much better pickup, and we’re able to produce a 24” cleaning path,” Meelker explained. “It picks up a lot better and cleans more surface area, so it allows the contractor to clean much faster. Also, picking up the water at the same time allows the contractor to be more environmentally responsible and not putting contaminated water down the storm drain.”

Environmental responsibility is something that Hydro Tek knows well. Being a California-based manufacturing facility has some unique challenges, as regulatory standards are stricter than in most parts of the country. However, it has allowed Hydro Tek to stay on top of pressure washing regulations. “We are usually at least a year or so ahead of the rest of the country,” when it comes to compliance. “There are a lot of hurdles to overcome, but we try to be part of the solution.”

To learn more about Hydro Tek and its products, please visit their website at www.HydroTek.us.