





# FROM SUPPLIER TO PARTNER...

## PACKAGED SOLUTIONS FROM UNLAUB HELP SMITHCO KEEP COOL

**B**ecoming a true partner to the customers they serve is the goal for most successful businesses. But how do you go from being just a product supplier to becoming a trusted member of your customer's team? For Unlaub, a distributor of Dodge® and Reliance® products, the path to partnership with Smithco Engineering was paved by supplying valuable packaged solutions.

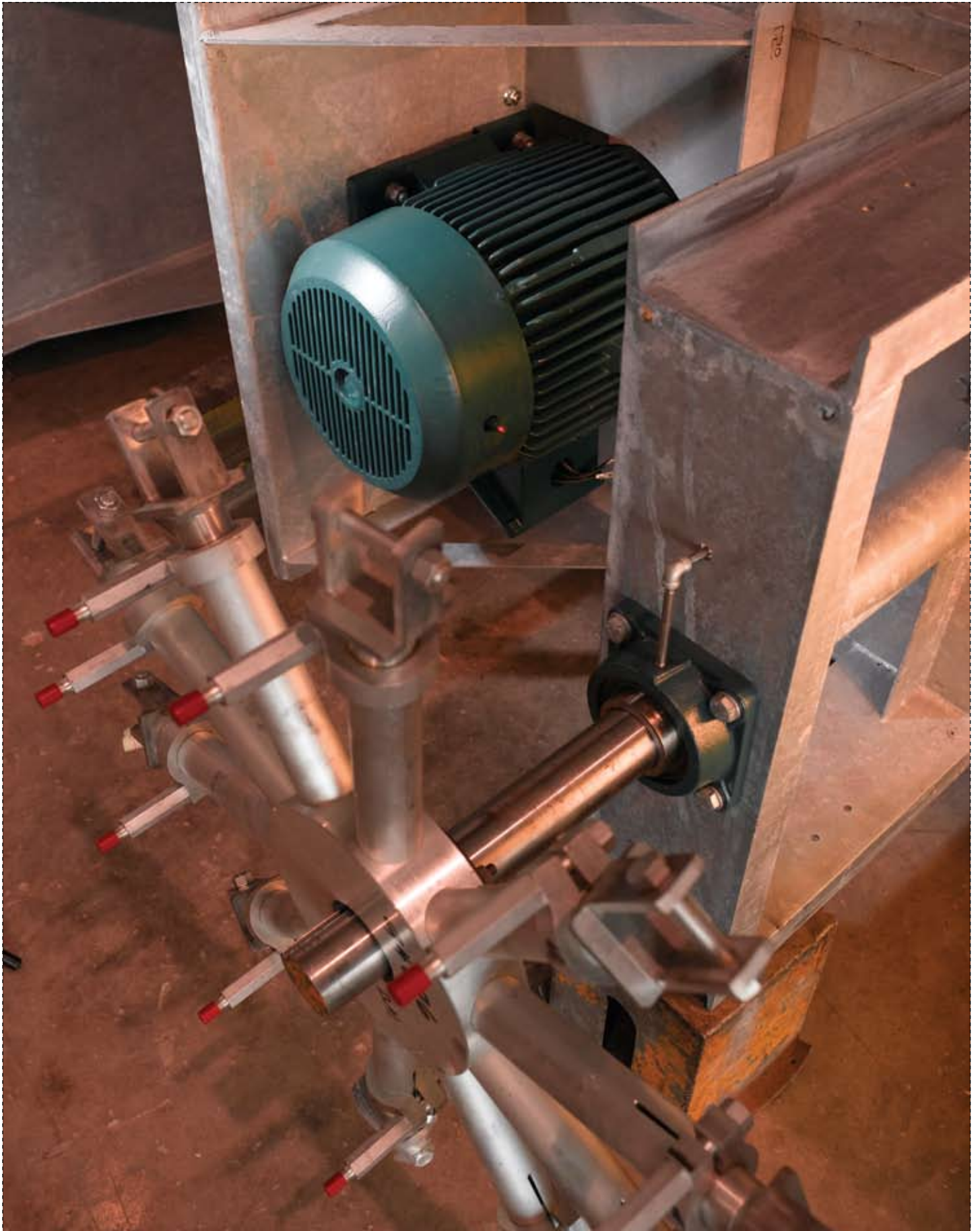
Since its founding in 1952, Smithco Engineering, a Tulsa, Oklahoma-based OEM, has been known as a leading designer and manufacturer of air-cooled heat exchangers. These products serve the specialized needs of refining, gas processing, chemical manufacturing, power generation, and other heavy industries. Air-cooled heat exchangers are commonly used to cool process fluids, and the fans that move the air are typically belt driven by motors.

### Could they Deliver?

Since the 1960s Smithco has depended on Unlaub as their source for Dodge drive components such as sheaves, bushings, bearings, and belts. But it wasn't until Smithco began to experience delivery problems with their motor supplier that they considered Unlaub for this product as well.

Smithco sales engineer, Eric Beeghly, says that when they first considered switching to Reliance motors he and other engineers were skeptical that their delivery demands could be met. "A manufacturer can make promises all day, but with the number of motors we need, we understood we were asking a lot," says Beeghly. "We wondered if Reliance could really come through."

Despite the high volumes, Beeghly is happy to report that all deliveries



have been met and all promises made have been kept. Chris Ashley, Smithco engineering manager, was also impressed. “Reliance manufacturing and Unlaub went beyond the demands we placed on them,” he says. “This performance was another step forward in the great relationship we have today.”

### The Beginnings of a Partnership

But Unlaub thought they could offer more than superior delivery on Dodge and Reliance products. Rod Coulter, Unlaub’s owner, wanted to help Smithco’s engineers with their equipment specifications long before the project went to the shop floor. By taking on this role, he believed Unlaub could save them time and money, all while creating a superior product.

“At the time we had the opportunity to supply motors to Smithco, a new Reliance 661XL air-cooled heat exchanger motor was being introduced,” says Coulter. “This motor was designed to meet the American Petroleum Institute

specification, API 661<sup>®</sup>, to help users achieve longer motor life in tough, belted-duty applications.”

With more customers demanding that equipment meet API specifications, Coulter offered to do the analysis to ensure that Smithco air-cooled heat exchangers meet all the specifications. A grateful Smithco engineering team began to send the project requirements for review.

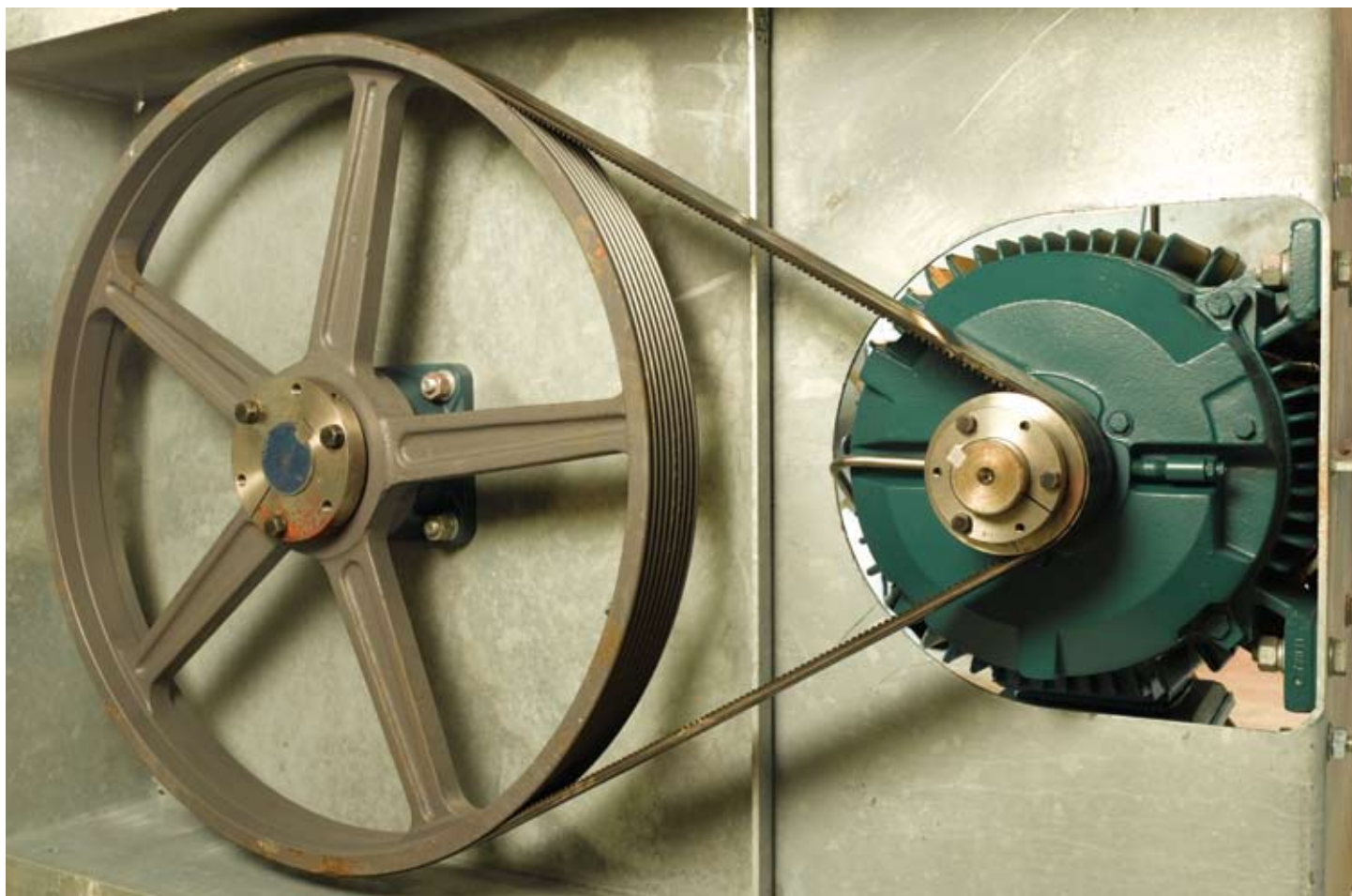
“We see the specs as early as possible so we have the time to break down all the detailed requirements for both the motor and mechanical elements of the project,” explains Coulter. “We then design the entire drive system, selecting the right motor and components, including the shaft, making sure everything will fit into the cooler properly. What we send back to Smithco is a complete design of the drive component package that is certified to meet API.”

Smithco engineers soon saw the benefits of Unlaub’s work. Beeghly believes that

not only do they get a design that meets API requirements, but they also get the most power dense and cost-effective drive package. “They don’t just give us a quote based on horse power requirements; they have industry knowledge and understand heat exchanger applications as well as we do. The bottom line is they help us give our customers a better product that meets performance standards.”

With Unlaub performing this critical analysis, Smithco engineers say they can spend more time focusing on meeting other customer needs. “Since Unlaub is focusing on the motor/mechanical drive package, we have been able to increase our engineering capacity,” says Beeghly. “We have an amazing relationship with the Unlaub team that allows us to devote more time to designing our equipment. We really value this relationship.”

Smithco engineers also appreciate the way information is delivered, which also saves time. “We get the information in one concise package from Unlaub,”



says Beeghly. “The motor and drive data comes to us in one e-mail, including the belt load data, load and life calculations, motor ratings, and motor performance data. They make it easy, and you can’t ask for more than that.”

**But Why Stop There**

Since Unlaub’s information package was so valuable to Smithco engineers, Coulter wondered if that same concept would be of any value to the plant where the air-cooled heat exchangers are manufactured. Plant manager Lloyd Hursh says when Coulter approached him to offer help he was more than willing to walk him through the plant and outline the manufacturing process.

*“They have helped us so much, and we trust them to do the job.”*

Eric Beeghley, Smithco sales engineer

“It was refreshing to have another set of eyes reviewing our process,” says Hursh. “We get so busy getting the job done, it’s hard to step back and see if there is a better way. This was valuable because they came up with a way for us to be more efficient and save time on assembly.”

What Coulter and Hursh discovered after watching the work flow was the amount of time spent tracking down all the motor and mechanical parts for a heat exchanger. “The parts would ship into our warehouse separately, and

we would have to keep up with it all,” explains Hursh. “Our employees spent nearly half their work time going through everything, trying to pull the correct pieces for the job. It was crazy because the time spent pulling parts didn’t add any value to the building of the unit – it was just wasted time.”

The solution they implemented, almost immediately, was for Unlaub to pull all the components for a particular job—from the shaft, bearings, bushings, belts and motors—put them all on one pallet, shrink wrap it, and ship it to the plant. “Unlaub ships us everything we need for a job when we need it,” says Hursh. “We don’t have to track any parts inventory, which allows our employees to spend their time building equipment. It’s saved us so much time that we are producing far more units each month with the same number of people.”

This effort helps Smithco meet customer needs for on-time delivery, and it also helps the plant to build the unit right the first time. “Because of the way Unlaub packages and labels the certified drive package,” says Hursh, “we know exactly what we are getting and what job the parts go to. The opportunity to mix up parts on a job is zero and we don’t have any guess work.”

**There’s No Arguing with Results**

Offering a valued customer a packaged solution may seem like a simple concept. But it’s the up-front collaboration that makes for true results and ultimately yields trusted partnerships.

“This relationship is just easy,” says Beeghly. “They have helped us so much, and we trust them to do the job.”

Ashley agrees that partnering with Unlaub was the right decision and says the packaging concept has worked better than he ever anticipated. “From our stand point, based on the performance of Unlaub and Dodge and Reliance products, we are not even considering anything else,” says Ashley. “This is what gets the job done, and this is what we’ll stick with for the future.”

