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March – April 2022

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Media Contact

Wendy Gugora, Director of Marketing
Prairie Capital Advisors, Inc.
630.413.5574
wgugora@prairiecap.com



**Prairie Represents Cyl-Tec, Inc.
in its Sale to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan**

OAKBROOK TERRACE, IL – February 28, 2022 – Prairie Capital Advisors, Inc. (“Prairie”), a leading middle-market investment bank, acted as financial advisor to Cyl-Tec, Inc. (“Cyl-Tec” or “the Company”) in the sale of the company to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

Headquartered in Aurora, Illinois, with additional warehouses in Washington and Canada, [Cyl-Tec](#) began as cylinder re-testing in 1991 and quickly grew into an international supplier of high-quality gas cylinders and bulk tanks. Today, the Company’s mission is to serve the needs of the compressed gas industry by providing exceptional value, high-quality products and expert customer service. Cyl-Tec prides itself on offering customers one place for all of their products and ensuring customers receive their products on time. With its experience and dedication, Cyl-Tec has come to be known as a prominent leader and innovator in the compressed gas industry who understands what matters most to customers.

Prairie worked closely with the management team and sellers, providing advisory expertise and managing the preparatory, structuring, due diligence and negotiation phases of the transaction. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed. “After considering several ownership transition structures for Cyl-Tec, it was evident that an ESOP met nearly all of our near- and long-term ownership transition objectives,” says Tom Bennett, President at Cyl-Tec. “Transitioning ownership to our employees was the ideal solution for our company. Prairie’s team demonstrated the expertise and guidance needed in structuring the right ESOP transaction for all of us.”

“Tom had a very clear vision of the future and how the ESOP could help contribute to the growth, success and independence of the Company,” commented [Rocky Fiore](#), Managing Director and COO at Prairie. “Inviting employees to share in the value created at Cyl-Tec will not only recognize their contributions to Cyl-Tec’s success but will also further their commitment to providing high-quality products and expert customer service.” [Dick Shuma](#), Managing Director at Prairie, added, “It was a pleasure working with the Cyl-Tec team throughout the entire transaction process. Cyl-Tec has all of the characteristics to become a successful ESOP company.”

About Prairie Capital Advisors

Prairie offers investment banking, ESOP advisory, valuations & opinions and financial reporting valuations to support the growth and ownership transition strategies of middle-market companies. Headquartered in Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois, the company is a leading advisor to closely-held companies nationwide. In 2022, Prairie was named ESOP Investment Bank of the Year by M&A Atlas. For more information, visit www.prairiecap.com.

###

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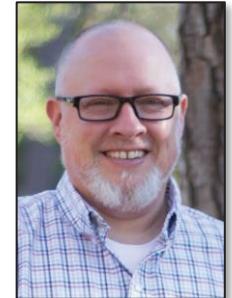
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Change For the Sake of Change

Buna, TX - How many times have we said or heard the phrase, "Something has to change," often said in desperation because something did not go according to plan? At times we might think we need drastic change to improve something. At other times we may feel a tweak will do. No matter what our school of thought is, meaningful and well thought out change will take you much further than a temporary patch.

In the past I would have probably considered large change to always be the best way to go. I was also probably short minded about employees and their rolls in problems. I often thought if they couldn't do the job at hand, I just needed to replace them. A few companies in my younger years made this easy since turnover was fairly high. If someone was not working out, you could probably just give it a few months and they would leave. This was poor thought on my part. In the last 20 years I have worked for two companies. One had moderate turnover and the other, which was my former employer (AMS) had very little turnover. For years, I thought it was our location and the lack of employment opportunities for people in the area. But the truth was simpler than that. It was how employees were handled when they were struggling.



When you hire a person for a job, they sometimes do really well or sometimes they struggle. No one ever knows how someone will do until they are doing the job you were hiring for. But, do you let them go if they don't do an amazing job? You hired them for a reason but employees are a bit harder to come by now adays. After reading a book called "Good to Great" by Jim Collins, I had a new appreciation for how to handle employees and make efforts to adjust to improve how our business ran.

My main takeaway from this book (and this is a gross oversimplification of the book) was having people on your bus and in the right seat of your bus. If someone does not perform well in one job, they may be the best you have ever had in another. But companies that have gone from being a good company to being a great company focused change on small pieces of the business and making sure they had the right people on their bus and in the correct seat of the bus.

Some may look at this as cross training and then realizing someone does something very well. Sometimes this happens in the most unlikely situations. But as we all look to improve our business with less resources than we are used to having, this is a great option. As I started this, change for the sake of change will not generate favorable results. Just like the changes I have talked about for your companies, I hope to do with this group. I hope to make sure we are all sitting in the correct seat of the bus and that the changes we make are for the purpose of improvement and not just to say changes have been made.

My goal is to help us work together as a unit towards more success, better communication and unified decisions. To do this, we all must participate in the group and participate in a way that benefits us all. If we only make decisions that improve our individual companies and there is no consideration as to what it will do to the group, we have lost the vision of our buying group.

So, if you have suggestions for improvement or concerns of current situations, reach out to me. We may not be able to use all the suggestions, but it may be a bit or piece that needs correcting to improve something larger. I appreciate the opportunity to serve this group and look forward to the great things we will accomplish together.

Member ✓ Updates

Join us in welcoming the newest members of the AIWD Buying Group!

Wasco Industrial LLC
Wayde Sawallich II
15 Pearl Ave.
Putnam, CT 06260
860-315-9225
wascomachines@gmail.com

Rockdale Welding Supply
Scott Meyer
2004 Cameron
Rockdale, TX 76567
512-446-2810
rockdalewelding@gmail.com

Eastern Welding Supply
Jeff Gleason
2453 Monticello Rd
Somerset, KY 42502
606-802-4444
jeff@easternweldingsupply.com

Higginbotham Welding Supply
Mike Higginbotham
1027 W Broadway
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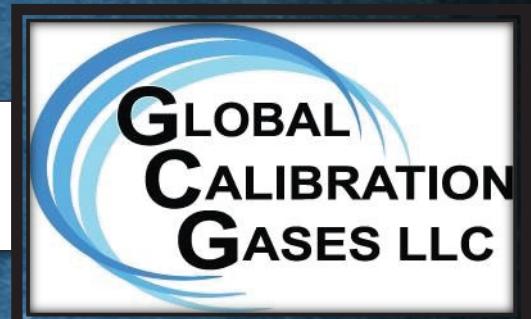


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Welding Material Sales, Inc.

3940 Stern Avenue
St. Charles, IL 60174
888-905-6737 fax 888-733-1512

Glenn's Den Spring 2022 – Please read!

With Spring in the air (at least it is here in Charleston SC), I figured it was time to inform everyone about what has been going on at Welding Material Sales. Business continues to be strong as our Blue Demon brand has rapidly become a Brand in Demand! We appreciate the support as welders are realizing Blue Demon truly has a consistent quality product. Retailers are enjoying our displays and new innovative products.

Over the holidays, we began the momentous task of combining 5 different locations into our new 80,000 square foot building in St. Charles Illinois. This building should provide enough room to finally have all of our operations under one roof and allow us to continue to grow. We are so excited about the efficiencies we will gain when the transition is finally complete. We also appreciate your patience and understanding while we continue to finalize the move over the next couple of months. When finished, please know you will be welcome to come see our operations! As you all probably know, we are much more than an importer as we cut, straighten, package and label all of our product before it leaves WMS. We hope to have a grand opening event in the fall.

That brings me to the current state of affairs. Raw Materials, packaging and shipping costs have continued to increase which I know does not come as a surprise. Supply chain is a constant battle but I hope you feel we have done a good job maintaining our supply. We took a very proactive approach with regard to our inventory but of course there are some things we just can't control. This will continue to be a constant battle but Team WMS is working hard to make sure we have the products that you need!

Unfortunately, the labor shortage continues to cause all of us substantial issues in production and slowing order turn around time. Costs for employees continues to increase and it's still difficult to fill positions. We are looking to combat that as best we can through automation and efficiencies at our new plant but unfortunately, it continues to be a major hurdle. Labor shortages are also a major factor in the increased shipping costs. Now after the Russian invasion, freight costs will continue to rise even more than in the past because of fuel. At Welding Material Sales, we had no choice but to update our current terms and conditions with higher minimums for free freight. (If you are not aware of this, please email me or sales@weldingmaterialsales.com to get a copy). Our focus in the immediate future is to work with the various transportation companies to re-bid our business. We are doing our best to keep logistics cost under control.

On a positive note, I hope you are aware of our newest product - Game Changers Gloves. We feel our new line of gloves may be the best welding glove in the industry and so far the response has been great! Please reach out to your rep if you are not aware. Team WMS works hard to be an industry leader in the filler metal business while continually creating innovative products. We are not alone in dealing with today's issues but I wanted to let everyone know what is happening at Welding Material Sales.

Thank you for your support!

Glenn Strovilas
Vice President
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Tracie Hunt

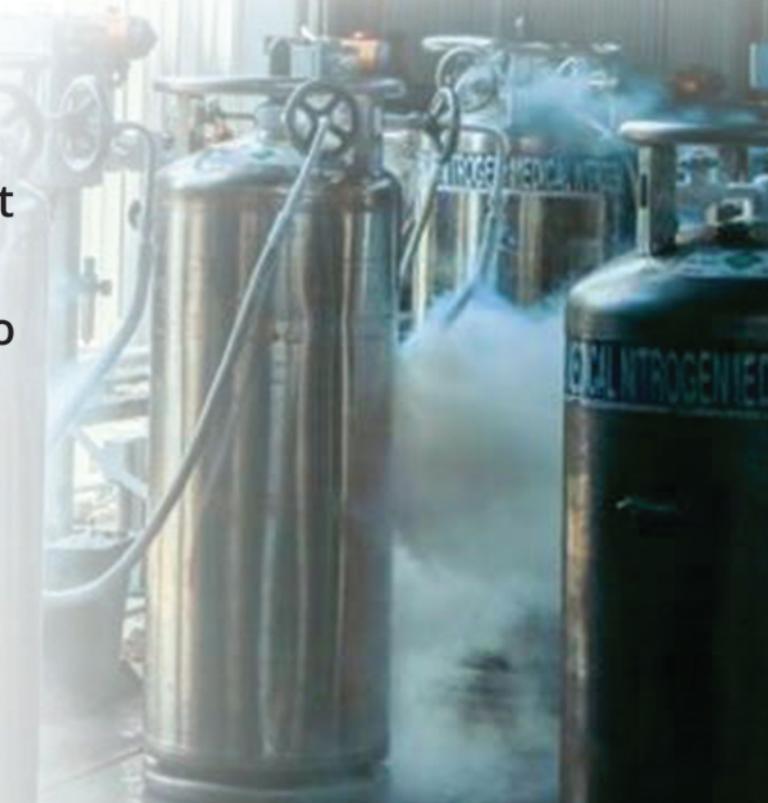


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SureWerx™ Acquires Footwear Specialties International

Adds Safety Footwear Portfolio to Growing Global Portfolio of Brands

Elgin, Illinois – March 17, 2022: SureWerx, a leading global manufacturer of safety, tool & equipment products, announced today that it has acquired Footwear Specialties International (FSI). Terms of the acquisition were not disclosed.

Based in Portland, Oregon, FSI is a leading safety footwear company, with solutions marketed primarily under the highly successful brands *Avenger Work Boots* and *Nautilus Safety Footwear*. Under the leadership of their President Aaron Atkinson, FSI has launched dozens of new, innovative safety footwear that has propelled the company into a leading position with respect to creativity, innovation, comfort & performance.

“Adding Avenger Work Boots and Nautilus Safety Footwear to our growing, world-class portfolio of SureWerx brands moves us further toward our goal of becoming the global leader in Safety & Productivity” said SureWerx CEO Chris Baby. “FSI offers an ever-growing range of high-quality, innovative safety footwear for all professional applications. Whether you work in a warehouse, a manufacturing plant, on a construction site, or in the service and utilities sectors, FSI has a proven, solution-based product that not only protects you from injury but also improves your quality of life”.

“FSI has always focused on delivering the best in safety footwear for professionals across many industry verticals” said Aaron Atkinson, President. “Joining SureWerx will enable us to accelerate our growth in existing channels, while at the same time expanding our reach into the extensive SureWerx distributor network”.

About SureWerx

Co-headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Elgin, Illinois, SureWerx is a leading global supplier of professional safety products, tools, and equipment. SureWerx markets its products:

In Canada under the JET, Strongarm, ITC, STARTECH, Pioneer, Ranpro, PeakWorks, Sellstrom, Jackson Safety, Due North, and K1 brands.

In the United States under the American Forge & Foundry, Pioneer, PeakWorks, Sellstrom, Jackson Safety, ADA Solutions, Due North, and K1 brands.

In Europe under the Jackson Safety, Sellstrom, Balder, Due North, and K1 brands.

SureWerx offers unparalleled access to its brands through its partner distributor network servicing the industrial, construction, safety, automotive aftermarket, healthcare, and food production markets globally. More information can be found at www.SureWerx.com.



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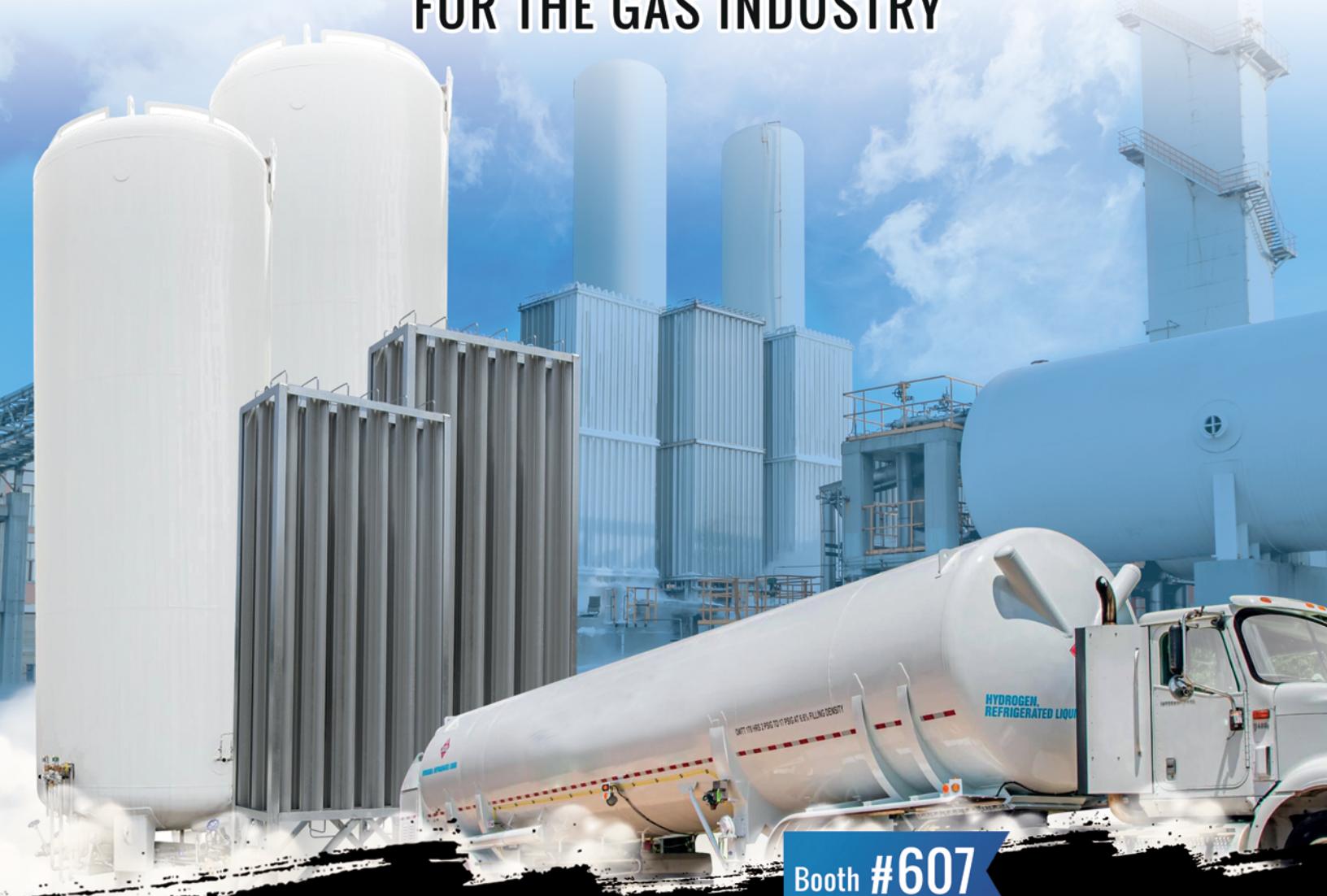
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Technology: Can You Trust Your Own Lying Eyes

By Dave Marquard, SuperFlash / IBEDA

A few years ago, I had attended forty consecutive AWS Welding/Fabtech Shows until the streak was snapped because of an important meeting elsewhere I had to attend. No one can physically be in two places at the same time, although today's technology allows us to "beam up" our presence from afar via electronic robot cameras. It's a technology my companies are investing heavily in because of the immense potential it has for allowing us to dramatically cut travel and expense costs.

In my absence from physically being at Fabtech I thought a lot about what I missed most about it. I missed walking the aisles, meeting people and seeing the latest welding technologies a lot—but oddly enough I also missed the entertaining shows I often found while walking those aisles—especially the magicians hired by companies to attract people to their booths.

Many magic tricks are based on illusions. The magician makes you think you saw something that didn't happen. The hand is quicker than the eye, and artful magicians use distraction to their advantage in creating illusions that befuddle even the most observant individuals.

My background and training as a cop probably makes me more observant than most. Even today, decades since I left police work, I still notice open doors, broken windows, people in industrial uniforms, anything that might seem out of place as I drive through neighborhoods. Is everything really what it seems to be?

Can you trust what your eyes are telling you? Not always. Take how Photoshop is used today to change and alter perceptions in advertising. The answer is that you have to understand the technology behind what you are seeing to trust your own lying eyes.

A good example is the "Evolution of Beauty Campaign" launched by Dove, a worldwide market leader in personal care products. It shows how Photoshop enables transformation from one look to another. In this case it's a woman's face being transformed from average to drop dead gorgeous for an advertising poster. Dove uses the campaign to explain how perceptions of beauty are distorted and to inspire confidence in young women that they can be just as beautiful as the models pictured in the ads they see.

It's amazing to me to see how technology can be used to so quickly change perceptions. I understand the physics of how the Photoshop software application works. It's an awesome tool to have at your marketing disposal. Necks can be elongated. Eyes can be made lighter or darker. Skin tone can be softened. The background can go from spring to winter with the touch of a button.

But somehow, I find joy in that I can't always trust my eyes today. I think I prefer walking through those aisles at Fabtech and getting sucked into a booth magic show. When the rabbit comes out of the hat, it didn't really happen. Or did it? The uncertainty is immensely satisfying!

Posted by [**LAURA FREDERICK**](#) in [Technology](#), [Business](#), [WEMCO](#), [FABTECH](#), [Marketing](#)

Re-Posted by [**DIANE CALHOUN**](#) in [AIWD insiderNews](#)

AIWD CONVENTION

2022

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EXHIBIT	INTERACTIONS	PRESENTATIONS	GUEST TOURS	SOCIAL
BUYING GROUP	SPEED NETWORKING	BREAKOUT SESSIONS	EXCURSIONS	RECEPTIONS



GOLF TOURNAMENT

NEW THIS YEAR!!
**NEW MEMBER
RECEPTION**

EST. 2022

Guest Speakers



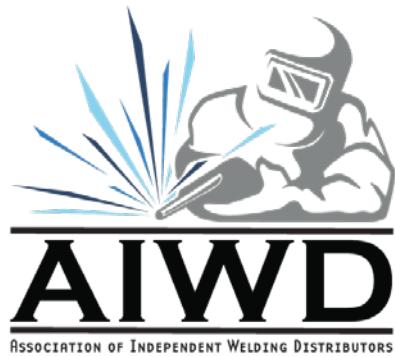
PRIMARY Categories up for Vote

Leather

TIG

Cable/Wire

Safety



P.O. Box 154 • Statesboro, GA 30459
www.aiwdgroup.net

AIWD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

South: Silvio Fernandez
AIWD President 2021-22
Discount Welds
305.637.3939

North: Tim Robb
Torco Supply
610.577.9733

Midwest: Connie Hoyt
Max's Breathe Easy Gases
316.321.6400

West: Clinton Bush
A-L Compressed Gases
509534.1585

Southwest: Douglas Seaman
Arizona Welding Supply
602-570-4492

Executive Director

Kelly Horton
khorton@aiwdgroup.com
847.323.5588

Operations & Events Director

Diane Calhoun
dcalhoun@aiwdgroup.com
817.602.9488

Treasurer

Connie Hoyt
connie@maxweldingsupplies.com
585.706.1764