



started getting him to build them. He would build them in the offseason. He applied for and received two patents on the product in the mid-to late nineties. It just kind of spread from there.

WHEN AND HOW DID THE COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE OF THE SAGE OIL VAC BEGIN?

Back in 2002, my father wanted to make the oil vac a full-time business. We realized that there were a lot of other industries and markets that were doing on-site oil changes. We really started marketing to other industries such as heavy equipment, construction, military, generator maintenance, and oil and gas.

HOW DID THIS PRODUCT MAKE THE TRANSITION INTO THE WIND ENERGY INDUSTRY?

In 2007 or 2008, my dad was delivering a system to a farmer up in Kansas. He stopped by a wind farm in Kansas. He was curious if the wind turbines had oil in them. He went into the O&M shop and found the guy who was in charge of the farm. He asked “do those have oil in them?” The guy said, “They’ve got a lot of oil in them... about 80 gallons.” Dad asked how they did the maintenance and oil changes. The guy said “I don’t think we’ve figured that out yet. I guess we’re going to take buckets up and down” As we started to research, we learned that there were a lot of companies doing bucket brigades — taking buckets of oil up and down the towers. We started working with Florida Power and Light. We quoted a system for them for a couple of years and it never made their budget. Finally, we built one for them. We found out what their needs were and designed it for them. That got the first unit going. The system has just evolved from there.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AT SAGE OIL VAC.

I have been with Sage Oil Vac since 2002 and have been the COO since then. I’m involved in the day-to-day operations and manage our people who are in charge of the different areas of our business. I’m still heavily involved in the promotion of the business — sales, marketing, trade shows. I also do the strategic planning for the business.

HOW DID SAGE OIL VAC COME ABOUT?

My father invented a system that he called an oil vac on his farm in the mid-90s. We had about 30 irrigation wells, and when they run constantly, you have to maintain the engines at regular service intervals. He had 30 engines that we were having to do oil changes on every two weeks. That can become quite a maintenance task. He came up with this product called an oil vac that he just built for his own use. It was a simple tool that used an air compressor to build vacuum. He rigged the pan of his irrigation engines with a quick disconnect so that he could connect this system directly to the engine pan and it would vacuum the oil out. Then it had a new oil tank that you could put new oil in and pressurize and it would put the new oil into the irrigation engine. He did it just because he was tired of the mess and the time it was taking.

He was doing oil changes in half the time it was taking him before. Area farmers

DO YOU HAVE PRODUCTS SPECIFICALLY FOR THE WIND ENERGY INDUSTRY?

We have Sage Oil Vac Wind as a brand. We call it the gear oil exchange system. It was developed specifically for doing wind tower oil changes. It has a used oil tank and a new oil tank. We use a single hose reel that holds two hoses — one for the used oil and one for the new oil. When we first started, the system was really simple. It had a used oil tank and hose, a new oil tank and hose, and a modified-diaphragm pump that we use to pump the oil up. As the industry evolved and we started getting requests from wind farms and O&M companies to do a gearbox flush. They wanted to be able to use a fluid to flush the gearbox, save that fluid, and use it two or three times before disposing of it. We started putting a third tank on there that had its own dedicated line and its own dedicated pump, so it was a totally separate circuit from the new oil. We’ve also always put a fine filtration system on the new oil on our systems, so that the operator could filter the new oil and get it to ISO cleanliness levels before they put it in the gearbox. Even new oil from the factory is not clean to the degree that some people would like to see it before putting it in the gearbox. As people wanted to start to flush, we put that dedicated tank in the system. We designed it so that they could dispense the flush fluid and then vacuum it back into the same tank and use it two or three times. Today, it’s evolved into a four-tank system. We build that system both in an open trailer and an enclosed trailer. for more harsh working conditions. ↘

For the complete Q&A with Aaron Sage,
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