DOING WHAT'S RIGHT

MEET TRUE MANUFACTURING. THE REFRIGERATION INNOVATOR LEADING THE CHARGE

BY COLLEEN DEHART

WHEN BOB TRULASKE STARTED TRUE →

← Manufacturing in his family's garage in 1945, he wasn't trying to start a revolution. He was trying to support his family with a quality product.

The privately held, family-owned company—which now distributes worldwide—is leading the charge in natural refrigerants. **True** utilizes propane-based hydrocarbon refrigeration to create refrigerators and freezers that are both energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

The first of his family to go to college, Trulaske paid for the whole thing on his own dime. An enthusiastic participant in ROTC, he became a pilot during World War II. He flew numerous missions throughout the war—most notably on D-Day. That true American devotion stuck with him throughout his business practices. The company is proud to say they are almost entirely American-made—manufacturing more than 85% of components in-house.

"We consider ourselves manufacturers in every sense of the word," says **John Ebenroth**, national director of sales and marketing for True Manufacturing. "We wear that badge on our chest very proudly. We are proud we are employing American people and glad we are not taking these jobs out of the country."

Part of producing the majority of components in-house ensures the company maintains consistent quality standards. Anything the company is unable to produce in-house they source to other American-made suppliers, and if they must go overseas for a component, they look for high quality over low price, Ebenroth says.

"This was passed down from my father ... it was a big part of what he did," says True Manufacturing Owner **Steve Trulaske**, son of Bob. "We have a huge focus on making sure the quality of the components are good, and with everything we do internally with the designs. We know what works and what doesn't and we consider ourselves experts."

Refrigeration has come a long way since Bob started the company 70 years ago. The type of refrigerants used has changed as environmental regulations have become stricter and awareness of refrigerants' effects on global warming has grown.

We recently sat down with the experts at True to find out more about their industry leading conversion to **R290 refrigerant** and just what that means for the industry.

PHOTOS, THIS SPREAD AND PREVIOUS: COURTESY OF TRUE MANUFACTURING

gb&d: What is hydrocarbon refrigerant (also known as R290)?
Ebenroth: It is a propane-based refrigerant that is very environmentally friendly. It is not man-made; there are no chemicals. It is able to absorb and dissipate heat more efficiently than current refrigerants. It is safe. When people hear propane they think of a barbecue grill. It is very different. The amount of propane is very small. In our largest systems it is less than 150 grams—as much as a couple BIC lighters. Our smallest systems are using half of that or less.

gb&d: Why did you make the decision to move to hydrocarbon refrigerant? Why is it better than other refrigerants?

Steve Trulaske: It was really because we saw it was the best. It created better reliability and operation of our cabinets. That was really the driving force. It is simply a better refrigerant. It has better capacity to remove heat out of the cabinet, and it is better for the environment. These are the best refrigeration systems we have ever designed and built.

The Global Warming Potential (GWP) of hydrocarbon refrigerant R290 is a three, whereas current hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) refrigerants score as high as 3922. R290's thermodynamic properties are superior to common HFCs, meaning it can absorb more heat, faster for quicker temperature recovery, and thus consumes less energy.

gb&d: How important is environmental social responsibility to True Manufacturing?

Ebenroth: We want to continue to be a responsible manufacturer. When the life cycle of a refrigerator or freezer is done, they do have an impact during disposal. We want to do our part to make sure it is as clean and environmentally responsible as possible.

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AMERICAN-MADE, AMERICAN-DRIVEN, DESIGNED AND DEVELOPED

They also use a lot of energy when operating, and we want to make sure we are minimizing the effect of that as much as possible. We have made an effort to redesign systems so they utilize as little energy as possible while maintaining food safety. We have to strike a balance between the two because we do not want to sacrifice safety. Hydrocarbon allows us to do both.

gb&d: As an industry leader, how do you hope to influence other industry professionals?

Trulaske: I think it is just good business practice to take the approach we are taking, but I have to admit that this path we have gone down with R290 has been a very expensive path. There are other alternatives we could have gone with and a lot of other companies are going that way, and I understand why. It is expensive to convert your whole factory to R290, but I think it is the best thing for the environment and the world. It is a win-win—you save on energy costs and you are helping the environment. I encourage each person to consider the best solution for their individual business.

gb&d: What does the future of True Manufacturing hold? Are there other innovations coming down the pipeline?

Trulaske: Of course. We are working on them every day. The world of refrigerants is big and full of different technologies that could come along. It is a very exciting time. We will start to see some real innovation come along in the controllers and electronic thermostats we are employing. There will be great benefits to the user, and the control of the cabinet. We will be using some different and better materials. There are some pretty exciting things we are working on.

Ebenroth: We will continue to work on being American-made, American-driven, designed, and developed. We are very customer-focused so we develop products and approaches that are customer-driven, not internally driven. We will continue to evaluate the industry and customers' needs and develop from there using the made in America with innovation mindset.

gb&d: Where are refrigerants going?

Ebenroth: The regulatory piece is the fulcrum of all of this. Depending on what the administration decides one way or another, we are prepared for both scenarios. We will continue down the path of R290. We are doing it for the right reasons and it has given us the right results. The industry is looking for replacements for the common ozone-depleting refrigerants, but they are focused on R290, so it has been a simple decision for us for the future of our product. **gb&d**

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