Distribution of hydraulic and pneumatic components in a thriving economy continues to be challenged with providing replacement components in a timely manner. With pressure for manufacturers to focus on high-volume OEMs, distributors must evaluate the products making their way into the market. A strategic stocking plan must provide replacement products for end users to minimize expensive downtime of equipment.

Hydraulic and pneumatic component manufacturers and end users rely on distribution to conduct the research to provide this valuable support. Assuring OEMs that the components they specify will be supported in the field improves confidence of the decision made for this specification. For this reason, Motion Industries continues to review stocking programs and technical resources to provide this support for the customers we serve and the manufacturers we represent.

One of the challenges in the fluid power industry is addressing the vast amount of options available with components. For example, there is a large number of hydraulic motor displacements, pump displacements and controls, and different cylinder bore sizes and strokes.

Although many common components with standard options can be stocked, we continue explore ways to better use our inventory by carrying parts that allow converting commonly stocked items. For example, we stock commonly sold hydraulic pumps and the parts necessary to change their displacement, port orientation, shaft size, or control. These conversions are done “same day” and can be shipped quickly.

We also take this same approach with pneumatic components. There are many opportunities to stock base units and change coils, operators, and valve operation to reduce finished goods inventory. We have used the conversion approach for some time now. However, we continue to work with our suppliers to find new ways to maximize our inventory options.

The next step up from a good fluid power conversion program is our build centers. With build centers, the corresponding distribution center or shop stocks the items needed to build a particular product series from basic parts instead of converting an existing component. Examples include our programs to build Eaton vane pumps, mobile hydraulic valves, Durst mobile pump drives, Stone hydraulic power units, and Aventics NFPA hydraulic and pneumatic cylinders. These programs help make 24-hr shipping routine and enable same-day shipment. This potentially decreases a four- to six-week lead time down to days, or even hours, with standard factory warranty.

Taking the Aventics NFPA cylinder build program as an example, our fluid power shop locations stock rod- and cap-end components, piston kits, and seal kits to support many different bore sizes, strokes, and mounting options. The shops also carry steel tube for the cylinder body and rod stock for the piston rod. This material is cut to length, the components are assembled, and the completed cylinder is tested and painted. We can offer standard 24-hour lead times and can accommodate emergency shipments within hours. The key to making these programs successful is to have experienced technical personnel who have been properly trained and certified by the product manufacturer.

Motion Industries’ build programs include NFPA cylinders, like the model shown. (Photo: Aventics)

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