

# QUALITY REIGNS

DESPITE OVERSEAS COMPETITION, HAGUE QUALITY WATER INTERNATIONAL REMAINS A KEY PLAYER. **BY FERNIE TIFLIS**



PRESIDENT BOB HAGUE SAYS HQWI'S FOCUS ON RESIDENTIAL WATER TREATMENT HAS HELPED IT SUCCEED.

**Because clean, drinkable water is** a necessity to live, Hague Quality Water International's (HQWI) products will always be in demand. However, it is the company's constant commitment to manufacturing high-quality products that helps this Groveport, Ohio-based firm compete in the industry.

For more than 50 years, HQWI has been manufacturing residential water treatment equipment for a variety of markets around the world.

"We manufacture point-of-entry residential water treatment products," second-generation owner and President Bob Hague explains. "Our company's products remove high lev-

els of minerals, iron, sulfur and other undesirable contaminants found in the water."

HQWI supplies its products to three market sectors: independent dealers specializing in water treatment; big-box stores such as Home Depot and Menards; and a variety of channels throughout the world such as big-box retailers in Russia, plumbing wholesalers in Italy, bakers and hairdressers in France, and water treatment specialists in Europe, Asia and Africa.

## STAYING FOCUSED

HQWI's longevity didn't come easy, Hague explains. "We are very tightly

focused on residential water treatment," he states. Although the company serves a variety of distribution channels, Hague notes its primary focus has always been on residential water treatment.

In addition, being family owned has been an advantage. "We have been under continuous ownership for the last 50 years," Hague stresses. "Many of our competitors have been purchased several times and that, I believe, inevitably causes them to shift focus and that's disruptive."

As a family owned firm, HQWI doesn't experience as much pressure as its competitors. "It allows us to take a very long view of things," Hague »

## HAGUE QUALITY WATER INTERNATIONAL



HQWI'S OPERATIONS ARE BASED IN OHIO, BUT IT SUPPLIES WORLDWIDE, INCLUDING EUROPEAN AND ASIAN MARKETS.

» continues. "We can make – and have made – business decisions that essentially had no profits, but knowing that in the long-term, they were the correct decisions. I am not under any pressure to maintain shared stock dividends."

He believes the company's customers enjoy the family atmosphere, as well. "Our customers like the fact that they can call us and speak to someone that has the same name as the business," Hague states. "They like that the principals can be closely identified with the business."

### DELIVERING HIGH VALUE

Increasing international competition doesn't intimidate Hague Quality Water International one bit. In fact, Hague is confident that customers will choose the company's products because of their quality. Cheaper price isn't always what clients look for, he notes.

"My products may cost more, but customers feel that we deliver enough

value, and that is worth paying more for a product," he states. In addition, because all of Hague Quality Water International's products are manufactured in its Ohio facility, the company can't always compete with its biggest cost competitor – China.

However, Hague believes that U.S.-made products have better acceptance in the market.

"People will pay more if they feel like they can get more," he explains. "In fact, the fastest-growing segment for our company is international sales. That is because we offer products that are more technologically advanced than most of our competitors, which allows us to export products mostly to Europe and to Asian countries, as well."

Quality continues to take the front seat in today's market, regardless of the industry, Hague maintains.

"The fact that we're growing shows that U.S. companies can still compete," he stresses. "You just have to

work hard at it. [Customers] know that we don't take short cuts."

### FUTURE PLANS

Although the current generation has at least 10 more active years in Hague Quality Water International's business, it is never too early to think about the third generation of leaders, Hague notes.

"We encourage the next generation to work for other companies for five-plus years prior to coming to work here," he states.

"It's important that they bring more to the business than just having the correct last name; they need to earn the respect of the people who work here."

Hague adds that he wants to continue to be a market player despite overseas competition. "I will never be the cheaper [manufacturer], nor we want to be so, but there will always be the people who want superior products, and I want to be the one to deliver that," he says. **mt**