

Is the Customer Always Right?

By Pete Jahrling, PMI Board of Directors President, Sloan Valve Company



Pete Jahrling

Manufacturers are constantly trying to improve their customer products and manufacturing operation processes through generally accepted best practices tools: Lean/Kaizen, process mapping, house of quality and others. In many of these operations tools, manufacturing teams define the “internal customer” as the team member who is receiving information or product from a fellow team member. This inherent “focus” on the

customer has long been an established pre-occupation with sales and marketing teammates for sharp focus, and operations has learned to embrace the all-encompassing meaning.

As a general tenet, is the customer always right?

The debate rages and each manufacturer adopts his own benefit from this phrase in dealing with internal and external customers in the marketplace. For some manufacturers, the customer is always right is THE GOLDEN rule; to other manufacturers, it is not so absolute, as it brings about unintended behavior.

External customers of our products are the final determining measure of all our collective manufacturing activities, including value-added and non-value-added tasks. We all can agree on a high level that, without customers and their needs, we would not be the manufacturing enterprises that we are today. At each of our companies, we work at influencing customer decisions through a secret mixture of brand, product performance, terms, and responsible manufacturing processes.

Customers refuse to award (pay for) many of the activities expected to realize their demand. This list of non-value-added activities ever increases over the months and years. As manufacturers court the external customer base, defining needs and unmet needs, they continually learn the characteristics of the market segments.

But is the external customer always right, seriously? When external customers return product for defective reasons only for the manufacturer to find out it was customer overstock,

or worse yet “cannibalized” by the customer, is the customer “right”? Or when the customer order is placed, manufactured, and delivered, but the customer returns the order because of a customer ordering error, is the customer “right”? Depending upon the distribution models you have, I am certain you can add to this list of what we as manufacturers might consider whether or not the customer is right.

Each one of our member companies develops a unique brand, which is only as strong as our last positive customer experience, product experience or service experience. We reach out to understand customer pain points and improve every aspect of the product and the way we distribute the product.

In the end, customers are fickle, cantankerous, demanding, confusing, vague, specific, distant, close, rewarding. We as manufacturers persevere in the quest for a more perfect experience with our manufactured products, from the moment a decision is made to purchase and through the operational maintenance, manufacturing, and finally into the replacement and disposal of the product.

What a wonderful model our manufacturing teams adopt; almost universally, the customer IS always right. We just need to adapt to make sure our products are more perfect in meeting their expectations.

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Leading in the Water Wilderness

By **Kerry Stackpole**, FASAE/CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director



Kerry Stackpole

As a leader, finding true north—even with a compass in hand—seems nearly impossible some days. **Sam**

Palmisano, former chairman of IBM, noted

that Americans are exposed to 3.26 zettabytes of data annually, with the vast majority flowing at us from ubiquitous TVs and chyrons flowing along the bottom edge of those screens mounted in hotels, restaurants, elevators, gas pumps, and at home. Increasingly that dataflow disrupts and leads to miscommunication about a host of risks and opportunities for action on important challenges relating to water-efficiency standards or America's aging water infrastructure.

That's where PMI comes in. Your association is challenging and collaborating across the frontiers of appliance efficiency, plumbing and building codes and standards, and regulatory and legislative initiatives. In the past several months, we've proactively engaged with legislators in Massachusetts, California, New York, Vermont, and Washington as they wrangle with new water-efficiency standards impacting plumbing fixtures and fittings in their respective states.

For some state leaders, California is the gold standard for water efficiency through the state's mandates for low flow showerheads, faucets, toilets, urinals, and commercial appliances. For others, they value the extraordinary success of WaterSense and the outstanding work of plumbing fixture manufacturers to deliver safe, water-saving appliances serve as the framework of their efforts.

The "how low can we go" mindset for water efficiency is fraught with a vari-

ety hazards and unknown unknowns – most not well understood and even fewer fully researched to clarify potential risks to human health and safety. With the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reporting 6,000 cases of Legionnaires' disease a year, the focus to keep Legionella out of building water systems has become a prime focus of the federal agency's efforts. So why the rush to legislate extraordinarily low flow rates without taking time to consider the health risks and systemic impacts?

We've already seen the risks of making ill-considered changes to water sources and the resulting calamity that became the Flint, Michigan, water crisis. To date, 15 current and former state and local officials have been charged with 51 criminal counts for their roles leading to the crisis. The charges include concealing the presence of Legionella in the water supply.

PMI believes in collaboration. The ability to influence and engage those seeking change comes from a willingness to seek understanding – and then to be understood. We are aware of people and organizations with whom we share little in common. Still, being a willing listener, an assertive advocate of our members' interests, and a committed partner in promoting water efficiency and safety are at the core of our mission.

PMI is committed to greater awareness and understanding of the emerging scientific research on the impact of low water flows in legacy water infrastructure. Our goal is to help educate those who are tasked with the challenge of making decisions that impact water efficiency and safe, responsible plumbing. Cooling towers, commercial and residential water systems, and underground piping are all part of an infrastructure designed in a different era that will be impacted by proposals for low flow water appliances. It

is not hyperbole to say public health will be at far greater risk if we get these changes wrong.

In its Legislative Outline for Rebuilding Infrastructure in America, the Trump Administration is calling for a vast public-private partnership funded by \$1 trillion in incentives, including numerous revisions in the methods used to develop inland waterways, U.S. Army Corp of Engineer projects, and water infrastructure resources for new projects. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) says the cost of rebuilding the nation's water infrastructure would soak up the entire \$1 trillion proposed by the administration to maintain and expand service over the next 25 years.

90% of Americans receive their drinking water from a public drinking water system according to the ASCE. Just 17% of the 51,356 community water systems serve close to 92% of the total population – about 273 million people. Nearly 6 billion gallons of treated water is lost due to leaking pipes and the estimated 240,000 water main breaks happening every year.

Former Vice President **Joe Biden** is fond of telling a story of visiting with Senate Majority Leader **Mike Mansfield** on a particularly tough day in the Senate. Senator Biden found himself complaining about a conversation he had overheard between two senators on the floor. Mansfield offered a bit of advice, "Joe, never question another man's motive. Question his judgment but never his motive."

As we look ahead to the growing debates surrounding water efficiency, water safety, and the renewal of water infrastructure, there will be many hard choices and judgments to make. At PMI, our motives are clear—safe, responsible plumbing always.

Colin Thielmann Aims to be ‘Part of the Solution’ at PMI

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

When **Colin Thielmann** graduated from college with a degree in marketing, becoming a toilet salesman was not on his radar. However, a local retail plumbing company in Manchester, Ohio, convinced him it was a great opportunity. Looking back on that day more than 20 years ago, Colin, co-chair of PMI's Allied Member Committee, said it was the start of a gratifying career full of surprises, lessons and big breakthroughs in the plumbing industry.

Some of Colin's most exciting moments and career "firsts" have come through his work with PMI, including participating as a member of the first Water-Sense committee and its first meeting with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Washington, D.C., in the early 2000s.

"I'm a big believer in PMI," he said. "When they were looking for a new Allied Committee co-chair for 2018, I went for it because I always want to be part of the solution." The committee's current efforts are focused on attracting more non-code body Allied members, like the manufacturers that supply plumbing fixture parts or raw materials, whose value proposition is a bit different than member companies manufacturing finished products, he explained.

While working as a product manager at the Delta Faucet Company in the early 2000s, Colin, now OEM sales manager at Kerox, said he was fortunate to have past PMI Board of Directors President **Paul Patton** as his mentor. Paul helped Colin work on an exciting new product for Delta that involved placing a diamond coating on ceramic discs used in faucets.

Another career accomplishment involved working on some of the initial smart-home technologies used in zero-energy home demonstration projects. Colin said it was an inspiring time for product development and now he's



Colin Thielmann, co-chair of PMI's Allied Member Committee

encouraged to see that trend taking off with so many smart-home bath fixtures featured at this year's Kitchen and Bath Industry Show (KBIS). "It's nice to see a lot of our early ideas coming to fruition today in practical and cost-efficient bathroom fixtures made by several PMI members," he said.

Colin's career reflects his drive to find a new or unique angle to solving customers' product challenges. For example, one of his recent projects at Kerox, an international company manufacturing

ceramic discs and ceramic disc cartridges used by residential and commercial plumbing manufacturers, involved modifying the Kerox pressure balance cartridge to update a customer's private label tub/shower valve. For 18 months, he worked closely on developing the new product with the customer and their manufacturing partner. When he first started at Kerox three years ago, Colin said he was surprised to discover how many different faucet brands manufactured around the world and sold in North America use Kerox cartridges. "In many ways, we are like the Intel of the faucet industry," he added.

On the weekends, Colin and his wife, **Irene**, enjoy taking camping trips in their new motor home. This February, they set off from their home in Indiana to spend the month soaking up the warmer weather in Florida.

Colin's daughter, **Annalisa**, caught her dad's travel bug and is currently studying abroad in Barcelona. She's a junior at Indiana University's (IU) School of Business and his son, **Alessandro**, is a freshman at IU.



Colin and his wife, Irene, enjoy traveling in their motor home

Take an Historical Journey at 2018 PMI Conference Site

PMI members attending the 2018 PMI Conference at the Wigwam Resort near Phoenix, Ariz., will be taken on an interesting historical journey while reaping the usual benefits of spending time with plumbing manufacturing peers.

The resort, as well as the town where it is located, Litchfield Park, were established as outposts of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, as was the town of Goodyear right down the road. After discovering that long-staple cotton extended the life of tires, the company bought 16,000 acres of Arizona land for cotton farming.

In 1918, Goodyear established the Organization House, the first building on the Wigwam site, as lodging for cotton ranch suppliers. These guests suggested that the area would be a great place to spend a winter vacation, as did Goodyear executives who sometimes brought their families when visiting the farm. On Thanksgiving Day, 1929, the Wigwam officially opened its doors as a guest ranch with enough rooms for 24 guests.

Although the resort has steadily grown over the years, a portion of the original Organizational House structure remains as a cornerstone of the Wigwam's authenticity and southwestern charm.

Last year's PMI Conference attracted representatives from 33 of 36 PMI member companies. In response to a post-conference survey, more than 95% of attendees reported they would recommend the conference to their colleagues and friends. "The content of conference sessions and interaction with industry peers is extremely valuable," wrote one survey responder. "The PMI team always does a great job with the conference and this year was no exception," said another.

PMI committees have begun making plans for the speakers and sessions. Get involved, and learn more about the Wigwam at wigwamarizona.com.



PCA Midwest Honors Chuck Allen for Passion in Plumbing

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Congratulations to **Charles S. “Chuck” Allen**, executive chairman of Sloan Valve Company and a long-standing PMI member, for being inducted into the Plumbing Contractors Association (PCA) Midwest 2018 Hall of Fame in January. Chuck, the third-generation leader of the family-operated company, was honored for his passion, ingenuity and personal commitment to improving the plumbing industry.

Pete Jahrling, director of design engineering at Sloan and president of PMI’s Board of Directors, nominated Chuck to recognize his 45 years of guiding Sloan through growth and innovation in the development of water-efficient plumbing solutions. Chuck has earned several patents and continues to be involved in engineering new products and groundbreaking technologies that save water and help protect the health of the nation. In addition, he has been instrumental in Sloan remaining a strong proponent and an active member of PMI.

During the PCA Winter Social at the Brookfield Zoo, Chuck was recognized along with fellow Hall of Fame inductees **John Bojan**, retired Plumbers Local 130 United Association (UA) pension fund administrator, and **James P. Smith**, past president of C.J. Erickson Plumbing Company.

The PCA Midwest Board of Directors created the Chicago Area Plumbing Industry Hall of Fame in 2002 to recognize individuals for their personal commitment, professional dedication and outstanding contributions to the Chicagoland plumbing industry.

As one of the oldest trade associations in the United States, founded in 1882, the PCA Midwest is affiliated with the national and state Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association (PHCC), Union Affiliated Contractors (UAC) of the PHCC, and the Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA) and represents over 300 union signatory (UA Plumbers Local 130) plumbing contractor firms operating in 17 counties in northern Illinois in labor relations and legislation.



Dave Ariano (right), past president of PCA Midwest, introduces Chuck Allen, executive chairman of Sloan Valve Company, as a PCA 2018 Hall of Fame inductee.



Chuck Allen poses with his sons, (from left) Graham, Jim and Kirk, at the PCA Winter Social Hall of Fame induction.



Chuck Allen received an award along with John Bojan, retired Plumbers Local 130 United Association (UA) pension fund administrator, and James P. Smith, past president of C.J. Erickson Plumbing Company.

How To Contribute to PMI's Social Media

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

The easiest way for PMI members to contribute to PMI social media efforts is to regularly follow the PMI and Safe Plumbing social media platforms and to comment on, like and/or share PMI social media messages.

PMI members are also encouraged to mention @SafePlumbing in Twitter messages and Safe Plumbing and Plumbing Manufacturers International in messages on other social platforms to draw the attention of PMI's social media team, as well as others, to those messages.

The PMI and Safe Plumbing social media platforms are as follows:

- Safe Plumbing Twitter twitter.com/SafePlumbing
- Safe Plumbing Facebook facebook.com/SafePlumbing/
- Safe Plumbing Google+ goo.gl/3xc65B
- PMI LinkedIn Company goo.gl/igu2na
- PMI LinkedIn Group goo.gl/3GWtpz
- Safe Plumbing LinkedIn Group goo.gl/CjbrM9
- Safe Plumbing YouTube youtube.com/user/SafePlumbing

The PMI social media team has produced a 2018 social media calendar that can be accessed within the members-only section of the safeplumbing.org website, under Outreach/Communication resources. This calendar is a living document and will be updated monthly.

How PMI Sets Social Media and Communications Content

Content is driven by issues relevant to PMI and our identified external audiences. This content is generally determined by ongoing communications between the PMI board, committees, staff and consultants, resulting in:

- Safeplumbing.org content, both for the general public and members only
- *Ripple Effect* stories
- *Inside My PMI* items – this content is primarily meant for PMI members only, but *Inside My PMI's* news summaries taken from public media outlets can be shared with external audiences
- PMI news releases

In addition, PMI will be regularly communicating on these issues, when applicable, in 2018:

- WaterSense
- Lead in plumbing
- Legionella
- Workplace development
- Community outreach
- PMI value, including videos
- Other issues, as they become discussed and relevant to PMI – water infrastructure, recycled water, green chemistry, labeling and marking, and trade.

Commonly used Twitter hashtags used by the PMI social media team include #Plumbing, #WhyPlumbingMatters, #PMIValue #WaterSense, #Water, #WaterEfficiency, #Sustainability, #WaterInfrastructure, #Legionella, and #LegionnairesDisease.

PMI Social Media Tactics

In addition, the PMI social media team has identified these tactics, which we encourage PMI members to adopt in their social media efforts:

- To help build brand awareness and equity, use PMI, Plumbing Manufacturers International, Safe Plumbing and @SafePlumbing as much as possible in messages.
- Follow members, allies, potential members, potential allies, related media and those who follow us if

Take the Social Media Survey for PMI Members

The PMI communications team has developed this survey to learn more about members' social media efforts. PMI will compile the results of the survey and, if there is member interest, develop a training for members about how we could develop and improve our social media programs. Take the survey here: goo.gl/eJGQcA

they are in a related industry.

- As much as possible, incorporate the use of a graphic or video into each message.
- As much as possible, use @ handles in Twitter messages and mentions into other messages, particularly of members and allies – examples, @EPAWaterSense, @EPA, @CalEnergy, etc.
- Comment, like and share as much as possible, particularly in a reciprocal fashion when followers comment, like and share on our posts.
- Participate in social media key moments, in particular KBIS (January) International Women's Day, World Plumbing Day and UN Water Day (March), Water Week (April), Sacramento Fly-In (May), EWTS (May), DC Fly-In (June), National Manufacturing Day and WaterSense Awards (October), PMI Conference (November), plus any other notable PMI-branded event.
- Like and share member messages on a rotating basis or as otherwise appropriate – strive to feature at least three per week on Twitter and other platforms as appropriate.
- To assure fairness among PMI members, messages about members will not cover product features, other than in general about WaterSense.

Celebrating Safe Water, Workplace Diversity in March

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

The month of March offers several events, including World Plumbing Day, International Women's Day and International Water Day, for the plumbing manufacturing industry to celebrate and support safe water, public health protection and workplace diversity.

Early in the month on March 8, International Women's Day gives businesses, governments, educational institutions, professional associations and others an opportunity to celebrate and expand their efforts advocating for workplace development and diversity. Launched as a formal celebration by the United Nations in 1975, this special day honors the cultural, political, social, and economic accomplishments of women. As the plumbing manufacturing industry builds upon its efforts to broaden and diversify its talent pool and encourage and motivate young people to enter the plumbing manufacturing industry, this day offers a platform to maintain that momentum. This year's theme – #PressforProgress – offers a

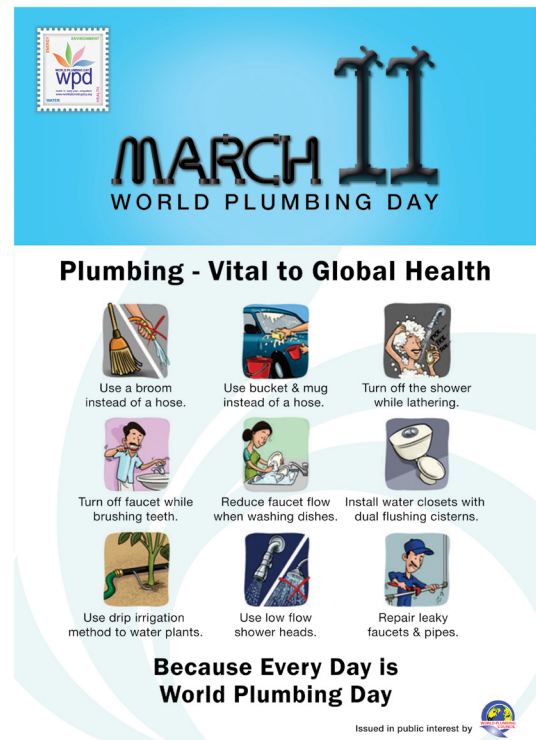
call to action, encouraging supporters of gender equality to press forward despite any obstacles. The website (internationalwomensday.com) offers several resources, including social media tools, to take action, plan an event and share stories.

On March 11, World Plumbing Day ([@WPlumbingDay](https://www.worldplumbingday.org)) helps to promote appreciation of the plumbing industry's vital work protecting the public's health and safety and advancing environmental sustainability. There are hundreds of annual World Plumbing Day events, linking plumbing, sanitation and human and environmental health, according to the World Plumbing Council (WPC), which established World Plumbing Day in 2010. Many in the industry have been promoting the day with messages on social media and contests for school children. IAPMO (@IAPMO) and the International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Foundation (@IWSH_Foundation) have invited children in first to sixth grades to par-

ticipate in the World Plumbing Day Poster Contest. (For official rules, go to: goo.gl/yauAym). For a list of ideas and suggested activities to promote World Plumbing Day, visit the WPC website (goo.gl/3Sn9ZU).

Another event highlighting the importance of safe water is the United Nations (UN) World Water Day on March 22. This year's theme, "Nature for Water," explores natural solutions to the water challenges currently facing the world. The UN-Water website (worldwaterday.org) shares stories of inspiration about nature and water from around the world; offers downloadable content to share, including a fact sheet, posters and participation certificate; and provides a worldwide "events" map that allows those sponsoring a Water Day event to upload their information and be added to the map.

PMI members are encouraged to participate in these events and to let PMI staff know about activities you have organized in recognition of these special days.



Early Bird EWTS Registration Deadline: March 15

The early bird registration deadline for the Emerging Water Technology Symposium is March 15. **Peter Williams**, chief technology officer for Big Green at IBM, will be the opening keynote speaker at the conference, to be held May 15-16, 2018, in Ontario, Calif. EWTS is presented by the American Society of Plumbing Engineers, the Alliance for Water Efficiency, the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials, and PMI, in cooperation with the World Plumbing Council.

Read more about the conference: goo.gl/ujWR5q



Dates Set for PMI Executive Forums and Legislative Fly-Ins

The Sacramento, Calif., PMI Executive Forum and Legislative Fly-In will be held May 8-9, 2018, and the Washington, D.C., PMI Executive Forum and Legislative Fly-In is slated for June 13-14, 2018.

These events provide PMI members with the opportunity to voice their concerns to California and federal legislators on issues relating to manufacturing, water efficiency, commerce, trade and more. Attendees also benefit from educational presentations from industry and legislative experts and from networking opportunities with participants.

Stay tuned for details!



The PMI delegation in front of the Capitol in Sacramento, Calif. at the 2017 PMI California Executive and Legislative Fly-In

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