FEATURE ARTICLE – ELLISON AC CASE

Passing the benefits along to their customers

Dedicating plant room space in buildings is becoming more and more of a challenge in the UK and across Europe. Recognizing this, Ellison AC has carved out a niche as a provider of packaged plant room solutions that are manufactured in their purpose built facility and delivered on site. They can be installed on roofs, on concrete pads or even underground.

These types of solutions are becoming quite popular with a wide range of customers, from defense to data centers, to business and shopping centers. A large part of Ellison AC’s success comes from their reputation and proven track record of delivering high quality solutions and their attention to their customer’s requirements and needs.

Strong client relationships are a key aspect of Ellison’s success. It’s the personal touch as Neil Dodgson, Project Director at Ellison AC explains: “Customers can ring up, and they do not get lost in the system of our production. They can speak to myself, any of the guys involved on the project side, and ultimately they can speak to our managing director direct.”

Ellison AC has designed and purpose-built their manufacturing facility in Morecombe, Lancashire, UK to streamline the production of the packaged plants. The packaged approach means that the integration of all the key elements in the chiller or pump room facility – including valves, pumps, pipework and control systems – are designed, specified and assembled by highly skilled staff working in their controlled factory environment.

As Neil Dodgson explains: “We can develop, design and build a product purely offsite. Generally we’re off the critical path of the main build of a contract, so ultimately you can have the building being built 20 stories and literally as soon as the site is ready, we can deliver our equipment and install it within the space from an hour or up to a weekend.”

The plant rooms are made in modules to allow them to be easily delivered and installed on-site. Once the plant room is complete and tested in the factory, each module is packaged for delivery to site as a virtually plug-and-play solution with minimal commissioning work required. They even time lapse the build so their customers can easily monitor the progress.

Neil’s justification is simple: “We deal with a diverse range of end users, but of course we are manufacturing within the same environment to a certain quality that we expect and require.” And he continues: “The fact is, we manufacture everything in house so every single process we do for the build is done and controlled, and monitored, in house, under our roof, from the beginning to the delivery date.”

That client relationship also means that Ellison looks to pass the benefits of the products they use inside their packaged plant solutions along to their customers. This includes even the variable speed drives they use to control the pumps.
“We have long recognized the advantage of controlling our pumps with VSD’s to provide the energy efficiency essential to meet the latest building regulations.” Neil Dodgson explains.

In HVAC applications, using a variable speed drives on pumps and fans help reduce energy consumption significantly (compared to throttle/damper control with direct-on-line motors). With pumps and fans, a 20 percent reduction in motor speed can reduce the power required by up to 50 percent.

Neil continues, “We initially contacted ABB with regards to an inquiry we had in Manchester. We started a conversation and we developed it from there. The benefits presented to us, from our perspective, enabled us to push forward with the ABB VSD, which was done because the end user had the benefit of that product.”

Ellison AC decided to use ABB’s drive for HVAC, the ACH550, to control the pumps used in the heating, chilled water and condensed water applications in the packaged plant rooms.

According to Neil Dodgson, “a key advantage of the ACH550 is that it is designed specifically for HVAC applications, so it comes with all the functions we need, built-in. That makes the drive exceptionally easy for us to set up. Our customers also appreciate its ease of use, and the straightforward interface with their overall building control systems.” The design of the ACH550 even helps reduce build time and costs since it doesn’t require additional backplate mounting.

Ellison AC has been so impressed with the ACH550 that they even proudly tweeted about it, saying that the “ACH550 is the best pump drive we have ever used.” But this tweet wasn’t just a random happening, it is part of Ellison’s digital media strategy. Neil Dodgson says that he’s noticed a change. “From a relationship with customer’s point of view, we have to adapt and control the way we correspond with our clients. Ultimately, the modern methods of correspondence – day-to-day correspondence, is your tweeting and your blogging.”

As Neil continues, a product’s capabilities alone are just part of what they are looking for. “We also know that we can rely on a high level of local support offered by ABB’s UK team to help us deal with any technical or logistical challenges.”

The real plus side to using ABB’s drives is the benefit they deliver to their end-customers, as Neil Dodgson explains: “We’ve got to look for a product that is of excellent quality, and offers ease of installation both for the mechanical and electrical side of things. Ultimately, we’ve got to look for a product that also brings benefits to our end-users – the people who are actually working day-to-day on the contracts. The ABB product benefits us initially, but will ultimately give the client the end-benefit.”

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Images:

Image 1. Custom HVAC solutions including valves, pumps, pipework and control systems are designed, specified and assembled entirely in-house.

Image 2. The packaged chiller and pump rooms are built in modules to ease delivery and installation on customer site, requiring minimal commissioning work.

Image 3. Using variable speed drives on pumps and fans, a 20 percent reduction in motor speed can reduce the power required by up to 50 percent.
Image 4. Ellison AC looks to pass the benefits of the products used in their solutions along to their customers, such as ABB’s drive for HVAC easing use and integration into building automation systems.

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