

The Power Transmission Distributors Association is the leading association for the industrial power transmission/motion control (PT/MC) distribution channel.

## Thinking Outside the (Gear)box: A Case Study

What happens when your end customer loses a critical component, and a replacement is not available? This situation is certainly not unique. As crisis-driven demands become more prevalent than ever, what matters is how distributors respond. Whether they can deliver on a request may make or break a customer relationship.

### Leveraging the Human Element

More and more, due to supply chain issues and other complications, distributors must look internally to in-house engineering and fabrication facilities and teams to design specific, and often unique, solutions to customer problems.

“That’s pretty much what we do all day,” says Brent Singer, president of Houston-based Ranger Conveying & Supply Co.,

Inc. “When a customer has a problem, we want their first thought to be of Ranger and knowing they can reach out to us and, no matter the issue, it will be handled. That’s the reputation we’ve built and has helped us grow throughout the past 40 years.”

Innovation has always been a key driver of success in the business world, and even more so today. In-depth knowledge of the products, process and product and critical technical expertise are now table stakes. Distributors who fail to innovate risk losing relevance and falling behind their competitors. In contrast, embracing innovation helps distributors differentiate themselves from competitors and even more so from online marketplaces known for a lack of customer service. In fact, the 2023 PTDA *Voice of the End Customer Report* reveals the top three considerations

driving customer loyalty: 1) the customer experience (easy returns, easy ordering, 24-hour emergency service, etc.); 2) inventory availability (having the products needed in stock when they are needed) and 3) professional sales reps.

Jordan Singer, the other half of the father and son team leading the charge at Ranger, elaborates on a recent experience where Ranger successfully executed on all three.

### The Problem

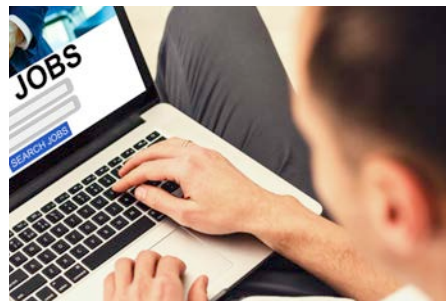
A major bulk terminal lost the gearbox on a critical inbound belt conveyor. “This conveyor runs 24/7/365,” says Jordan. “It was a right-angle helical bevel reducer with a 150 HP motor skid mounted on a swing base to the low-speed shaft via a keyed hollow bore. The low-speed shaft through the gearbox was metric.”

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## The Bigger Problem

“The gearbox was 25 years old, and the end user did not have a critical spare on hand to replace the gearbox to get their conveyor back up and running,” says Jordan.

## Thinking Outside the (Gearbox)

Despite the problem emerging on the cusp of the Fourth of July holiday, Ranger rose to the challenge.

“Our sales personnel received the call after hours on June 30 notifying us of the breakdown,” says Jordan. “The customer needed a solution and quickly, looking to us to help get them back up and running as soon as possible. Our mechanical field service personnel were on site the morning of July 1 and brought the existing head pulley assembly to our Houston facility.”

From there, Ranger identified parts and checked supplier inventory. Here is where the strategic partnership with manufacturers was exemplified. The company was able to get a new head pulley with bushings from supplier Precision Pulley & Idler’s (PPI) stock at its Tennessee warehouse.

“We already had the 5-7/16” SAF bearings and appropriate reducer in stock but we needed the backstop, motor mount and belt guard,” Jordan

shares. “PPI has excellent inventory and after-sales customer service, so we were able to get them on the phone and set up hot shots to arrive at our facility in Houston by lunch time on Sunday, July 2.”

The Ranger team kicked their efforts into high gear (no pun intended) to co-create the finished product.

“Our machine shop worked the weekend, machining a new 6 ½” 4140 head shaft down to 5 7/16” for the bearings and gearbox,” says Jordan.

“Upon arrival of the items from our vendors and the completion of the shaft in our machine shop, our mechanical crew was able to put together the new assembly, make modifications to the existing conveyor frame and reinstall it back onto the conveyor to get the end user up and running at 11:30 a.m. on July 3.”

## The Outcome

The quick turnaround and completion of the breakdown project allowed Ranger’s customer to get their system back in operation within hours instead of months.

“The wait time for the exact replacement of the reducer was 20 weeks,” shares Jordan. “We were able to save our customer hundreds of thousands of dollars in potential down time and



prevent them from going into breach of contract with their customer for not being able to operate the conveyor.”

As evidenced by Ranger’s story, prompt and effective after-sales support can help build trust and loyalty with customers, leading to repeat business and positive word-of-mouth referrals.

“Our customers know that we will do anything and everything to get them up and running as quickly, efficiently and cost effectively as possible,” says Singer. “With our extensive inventory and over 400+ combined years of power transmission knowledge, we are truly a one stop shop when it comes to anything and everything related to power transmission.

Ranger takes pride in offering one of the largest inventories of power transmission and heavy-duty conveyor belting in the U.S. “From rock to rice and everything in between, we can keep it running efficiently and safely,” says Jordan. ■

*Do you have a company success story to share? Contact Jennifer Busk at [jbusk@ptda.org](mailto:jbusk@ptda.org) to be considered for a future issue of Transmissions.*

