

Editor's Note: Ask anyone who's done it: Writing well in the field of petroleum equipment can be a challenge. Interested readers come from many disciplines, including architecture, engineering, construction, inspection, distribution, marketing—the list goes on and on. As a result, what may be obvious and general knowledge to some will inevitably be “news” to others.

Also, at least at first mention, the subject of petroleum equipment itself does not seem to stir the imagination of either friend or family. (If you doubt this, just try to get a good discussion going on how best to install an underground storage tank or on the nuances involved in current code developments at the next party you attend.)

When John Hartmann published the first issue of *Petroleum Equipment & Technology* Magazine in January 1996, he determined that *PE&T* columns would be written by experienced, seasoned communicators—individuals who had risen to (or near) the top of their respective professions by dint of skill, character, knowledge and hard work. Three full years—and 23 magazine issues later—*PE&T* columnists are succeeding in fulfilling John's original goal. They are some of the “best and brightest” (and in many cases, some of the wittiest) people in and around the industry.

Who are *PE&T*'s year round experts, better known as our regular columnists? We have asked them to tell you more about themselves in their own words in this 1999 Buyers Guide and in the next few issues of *PE&T*.

Meet the dream team of writers...

Getting a Good Read from *PE&T* Columnists



Wolf and his wife, Linnea, have been sailing Lake Michigan for the last 10 years. They also take three or four vacations during the year to collect Native American art.

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Wolf H. Koch, PhD

After pursuing a career with Amoco, developing nine patents and teaching thousands of prospective engineers, Wolf founded Technology Resources International, Inc. (TRI) in Batavia, IL. As president of TRI, he provides services in technology planning, product development and testing, as well as litigation support. Wolf is an expert in retail service-station technology, product distribution, natural gas vehicles and associated fueling systems. *PE&T* profiled Wolf in the October 1998 issue (“Wolf Koch: Developing Minds and Patents Through Creative Problem Solving,” page 23). He has written numerous columns and articles for *PE&T* on a variety of subjects, including patents, vapor recovery

and robotics. In this issue, Wolf reports on CARB's most recent public meeting on ORVR and vapor recovery certification (“CARB Proposes Major Changes to Certification Process,” page 86).

1. If you were going to write a book, what would be the title? And what would you want to accomplish by writing it?

While I have not thought about titles (I would turn that over to a marketer), I have considered working on books of various subjects. I am currently discussing co-authorship of a book with one of my former associates on how to bring products to market. Within my years of working in the metal finishing, chemical and petroleum industries (and, more recently, all aspects of fuel distribution and retailing), I have collected a wealth of case studies on successful, as well as unsuccessful, projects. The objective of the book will be to provide guidance on how to pick and develop potential winners.

2. In terms of your professional development, what is the most influential book (or text) you've ever read?

Over the years, a number of great technical books have shaped my career. In recent years, there are two books that have influenced my work: *Leadership Jazz* by Max DePree and *The Art of the Long View* by Peter Schwartz. The former distinguishes between leadership and management. DePree shows how leaders shape an organization's vision, values and practices. The latter, along with follow-up articles in various journals, develops scenario planning as a strategic planning tool, or, as the

author puts it, describes “planning for the future in an uncertain world.”

3. Describe one of your work-related accomplishments in which you take great pride.

During my tenure at Amoco, I was fortunate to work with many talented people. My job was to lead the technology effort in product distribution and retailing. One of our accomplishments was to change the vapor recovery industry by certifying the first bootless vapor recovery system in 1987 and introducing it in the St. Louis market. During that time we motivated vendors to build equipment and motivated regulators to be receptive to changing certification requirements. This was no easy task. However, when the rest of the country changed to vapor recovery in 1993, more than 300,000 bootless nozzles were installed outside California.

4. In your estimation, what will be the most important development(s) in your area of expertise over the next decade?

As I have discussed in two previous *PE&T* columns, alternative fuels are coming and will have an impact in the future on how fuels are distributed and retailed. While the impact will be small initially, relative to the size of the fuel distribution industry, there will nevertheless be changes which will require careful planning and the development of new equipment. By 2003, in less than five years, 10 percent of new vehicle sales in California must be zero emissions vehicles (ZEV)—clearly an opportunity for some equipment suppliers.

5. What new adventure(s) do you want to tackle over the next one to five years, professionally and/or personally?

During the next several years, I want to expand my consulting activities to help inventors bring products to market. I am also considering entering the equipment market in selected areas through partnerships with other entrepreneurs. After several years of consulting as a sole practitioner, I have come to miss the interaction with other professionals. These interactions are necessary to sharpen ideas and, ultimately, lead to better and more creative solutions.

6. Other than family members, name someone who has been particularly influential in helping you to shape the skills and

expertise that you now possess. How was that influence demonstrated?

While starting a specialty chemicals manufacturing and consulting business in the mid-1970s, I had the good fortune to be introduced to Gary Howell, a chemical engineer with 20-plus years experience in process development. Gary was fulfilling his dream of developing a manufacturing process for a polymer catalyst. He had invested his life's savings in building a plant and offered me space for my operation. During our three-year collaboration, I learned more practical engineering than in any other job I had ever had. In addition, Gary taught me other practical skills not normally part of an engineer's repertoire such as welding, brazing, pipe fitting and equipment maintenance.

7. If you could put your philosophy of life into 30 words or less, what would it be?

Perform every job to our best abilities; learn from all endeavors, whether success or failure; give credit where credit is due; return something to the profession and community.