

Innovation — Groundbreaking innovation in Calgary

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Dan Themig, co-founder and president of Packers Plus.

Photograph by: Adrian Shellard, Calgary Herald

So where exactly does innovation come from?

Some would argue that people are born innovators, while others believe that people can develop the skills and knowledge required to be an innovator. All agree, however, that innovation often starts with a spark that ignites a passion to create, a drive to embark on a journey that is neither clearly marked nor easy.

That spark may be organic, personal and heartfelt, related to personal interest and experiences. Or, that spark may be more pragmatic — based on the opportunity to solve a problem, creating a market-driven solution. Wherever that initial spark comes from, innovation is regarded as the core of every technology company, the fundamental building-block of ongoing success and sustainability.

PACKERS PLUS

Perhaps one of the greatest demonstrations of game-changing innovation developed in Calgary is that of Packers Plus. Creators of the StackFRAC system, the first ball drop system used to complete horizontal wells in multiple stages, the company has truly revolutionized the oil and gas industry.

Reflecting on the genesis of Packers Plus and its incredible success, co-founder and president Dan

Themig explains that he and his partners Ken Paltzat and Peter Krabben “decided right from the outset to be a high-value provider,” allowing them to “compete at the highest level” in an industry that, at the time, was not known for innovation.

Themig recounts when the company was established in 2000, “the industry was into diversification, I told my business partners that we needed to be focused — pick a narrow technology and compete worldwide.”

Deciding to address the most difficult downhole challenges in the oil and gas industry, Themig believed that “if we could be world-class at those, we could be game-changing...but we really didn’t see it (the magnitude of the change) coming.” The company’s revolutionary technology launched the industry into a new realm — horizontal wells and shale plays.

Reinforcing the company’s position as a world-leader — investing in research and development, launching new products and tackling new markets — Packers Plus has also revolutionized its operations. The company recently opened the doors of its MX Manufacturing Centre — the first of its kind in the world. This state-of-the-art facility includes the world’s first robotic assembly of its type, and a testing and torquing system that includes a proprietary traceability method that was developed in-house.

While innovation remains a cornerstone of Packers Plus’ continued success, Themig points out that “we do a number of things to spark innovation.”

Citing the company’s annual technical conference, strategy sessions and workshops where people from the various business units contribute to the direction of the company, he shares that “people come with the expectation that we are going to be innovative, that they will see innovation and that they will be part of it.”

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