

# Exploring the Compressed Air Utility Customer Buying Experience:

## Consideration to Implementation

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Industrial Process and Manufacturing Facilities can now choose between capital intensive “invest, own and maintain” compressed air system components, or they can implement equipment obtained from a provider of compressed air utility services. A compressed air utility service delivers compressed air system components as a monthly fee-for service arrangement, with no capital outlay or investment. In addition, with a utility service, the customer bears no responsibility to maintain, monitor or service the compressed air system equipment.

Often, customers begin with a focus on replacement of older compressors and dryers, which are near the end of their useful service lives. All compressed air system components eventually begin to wear-out, becoming very expensive to maintain and repair. Reliability suffers, resulting in downtime and significant compressor rental requirements. High associated rental costs can become an ongoing, expensive nuisance. Compressed Air Utility Services can replace one, several, or all the compressors and associated components in a system. The Compressed Air Utility Service concept is a practical prop-

osition to consider as the capital cost saving alternative to outright purchase and ownership.

Beyond the capital savings associated with purchasing compressed air systems as a utility, the routine maintenance, service and repair costs become the sole responsibility of the utility provider. Back-up compressors and dryers are generally included in the utility service arrangement to ensure a reliable, constant compressed air supply to provide the cfm, pressure and dewpoint requirements for the application. The flow, pressure and dewpoint is also guaranteed with liquidated damages applicable if they are not delivered.

Compressed air purchased as a Utility Service is offered as an all-inclusive, cost-effective means of implementing high quality, pre-engineered, piped-and-wired, plug-and play, modularized components into an existing compressed air distribution system.

Now that we’ve discussed “why” customers often consider this attractive compressor equipment alternative, let’s explore how to efficiently implement these systems.

## Application Questions / Review of System Issues and Requirements

Exploring the possibilities of purchasing Compressed Air Utility Services usually begins with contacting a company with experience in providing the equipment, maintenance, engineering and financing required. In addition, packaging and monitoring services are mandatory for a successful compressed air system utility installation.

Usually, in a one-hour remote meeting between key customer personnel and experienced compressed air professionals from

a qualified Compressed Air Utility supplier, customers are asked specific questions about their general concerns and their compressed air supply priorities. The existing system is discussed in some detail, and a compressed air audit and leak detection are often recommended.

The audit can confirm supply-side energy use, and often results in more energy efficient equipment implementation suggestions. Annual energy savings can range from 15% - 40%, depending upon the particular system variables. A comprehensive leak identification and resolution process, if implemented, can create an energy savings of 10-25%.



## COMPRESSED AIR SYSTEM ANALYSIS: THE WALK-THRU / CURRENT SYSTEM DATA GATHERING

On determination that the customer is a viable candidate for the Compressed Air Utility Service, and on agreement by the potential customer, a facility walk-thru is scheduled. The walk-thru provides information "checks" and details the customers current air supply situation. The walk-thru is also an opportunity to further discuss the customers air supply concerns. Critical current and expected costs of the operations are reviewed. Near-term system cost expenditure estimates are required to build a comprehensive Return on Investment (ROI) summary which helps to justify the costs of the Utility Service implementation.

## SYSTEM ANALYSIS / UTILITY SERVICE EQUIPMENT APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Soon after the walk-thru, the System Analysis is completed and provided for the customer. The report details the customers current air system from a point-of-view of compressed air system professionals and provides a basis for discussion of the proposed utility system suggestions made by the utility service vendor. Also, the ROI summary, based on total current and expected system costs, is provided to compare the suggested compressed air utility system improvements. Often, the ROI identifies significant electrical cost savings as well as reductions for maintenance and service costs by implementing the utility services

suggested by the utility provider. **Total annual savings of 25-40% can be realized.**

## UTILITY SERVICES QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The System Analysis Report is presented by the Utility Service Provider so that the customer's key decision-makers can decide on the implementation of the utility system. Customer questions are addressed in complete detail. The customer's system requirements in terms of cfm, pressure, dewpoint, air quality and hp utilization are reviewed. Specific compressed air utility equipment recommendations and options are discussed, as well as the planned location of the new utility air system components. Integrated controls and 24/7 monitoring are always included to enhance the reliability of the utility air system implementation. Back-up compressed air equipment is often provided to eliminate costly emergency rental air requirements.

## DECISION TIME

The System Analysis Report becomes the roadmap for an informed compressed air system upgrade. The customer can use it to make the best decision on whether the Compressed Air Utility Service makes sense vs. purchasing, owning, designing, installing, maintaining, servicing and monitoring the compressed air system enhancements on their own.

## System Implementation

Depending on the application and design requirements of the customized Compressed Air Utility Services, implementation can take 2-3 weeks or much longer for very large systems, or if equipment lead-times dictate. Rotary screw systems and even centrifugal systems

with dedicated desiccant dryers are generally available from inventory. These systems are modularized, pre-piped, wired and ready for plug-and-play use.

*(For answers to questions regarding any of the information contained here, please contact MPW Industrial Air Services.)*