

Gas keeps beverage market flowing

Regulators, manifolds, telemetry add value, increase business opportunities

Contributed by Harris Products Group

The hospitality industry has long relied on distributors for carbon dioxide (CO₂) and nitrogen to dispense soda, beer, wine and even coffee. Now, with craft brewers and homebrewers also looking for gas-related products, there are more opportunities to “tap” into additional business.

Harris Products Group, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Lincoln Electric with headquarters in Mason, Ohio, has more than 100 years of experience with gas handling and delivery systems and is partnering with distributors as they supply the gas regulators, manifolds and auto-switchover systems that are designed for beverage production and dispensing.

What end users want from their gas suppliers

Restaurants and other beverage retailers rely on their gas distributors to keep the drinks flowing. They want their distributor to help them figure out the amounts and types of gas they need so they don't run out on a busy Saturday night. They want their distributor to schedule deliveries at convenient times when their business won't be interrupted. And of course, they want their distributor to supply durable equipment that can handle constant use.

According to Tom Trame, Manager of Specialty Gas Accounts for Harris, single-stage gas regulators for pressure control from cylinders are

the workhorses for beverage systems. Harris produces regulators for CO₂ systems and also for nitrogen systems that are used with Guinness-type stout and lager beer.

“Bartenders, restaurant employees, venue operators and anyone serving drinks to a crowd don't have time to waste with malfunctioning systems,” he explained. “They want products that are designed to perform consistently, and built to last.”

Harris' dual gauge regulators are backed with industry-leading seven-year warranties, and each includes a high-pressure gauge with a maximum inlet of 3,000 psi to measure cylinder pressure and a low-pressure gauge with

a delivery of up to 150 psi to measure the “out” or “pouring” pressure.

Most commercial customers want to prevent employees from adjusting these gauges, so Harris produces “set and forget” regulators with preset pressure outputs to match customer needs. But, for home brewers and craft brewers who want a broader choice of options, Harris produces regulators with adjustable pressure controls and built-in check valves.

Having a constant flow of gas is another huge concern for this market. Any interruptions to their gas flow can cost thousands of dollars in short-term losses, as well as longer-term losses because of customer dissatisfaction. ▶



© Harris Products Group | A beverage switchover with telemetry

► Switchover products can help prevent these problems.

Automatic switchover systems keep gas and beverages flowing by allowing users to receive constant pressure by automatically switching gas supply from a primary to a reserve cylinder. This minimizes lost product and downtime and also enables an operator to replenish the primary gas supply when it is convenient.

Microbreweries rely on a steady supply of nitrogen and CO₂ in the brewing process. Nitrogen may be produced on-site using a nitrogen generator, while CO₂ will likely be supplied from a bulk tank. Any disruption to the supply of these gases, such as a power outage, would negatively impact the brewing process. To protect from a disruption in gas supply, these establishments should consider adding pressurized cylinders to serve as an emergency supply. These cylinders can be incorporated into the brewing process through the use of a back-up panel. For example, the Harris Model SG 770 backup panel will automatically switch the gas source to a back-up gas cylinder when the supply pressure drops below a preset value. Once the electric power is restored and the nitrogen or CO₂ source is operating, the SG 770 will automatically shut-off the reserve cylinders and resume the gas flow from the primary source.

Telemetry solutions

A way to streamline gas delivery and also collect gas usage data is to incorporate data collection and telemetry into the switchover system.

Switchover systems with telemetry eliminate gas supply issues by allowing the customer and distributor access to information at all times. They can view usage via a dashboard at any time, and can also be advised of information via texts and emails. The system operates on a cellular network so no Wi-Fi or



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Ethernet is required, has automatic re-order capabilities, and generates product usage reports.

Telemetry provides data that will help with budgets and planning. The easy-to-install and easy-to-integrate telemetry systems also give the distributor a way to operate more efficiently and effectively.

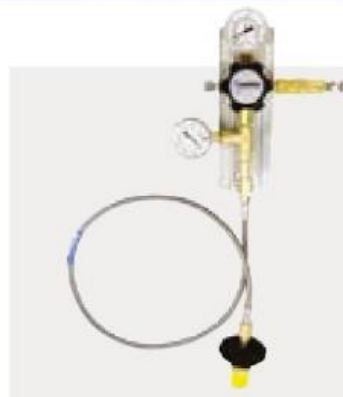
Distributor cost savings

Wright Brothers Global Gas, LLC is a leading producer and supplier of industrial and high-performance specialty gases nationally. Its affiliate, VMG (Vendor Managed Gas) partners with Harris in providing affordable and effective telemetry solutions for the beverage industry and other industries.

“An emergency is expensive in terms of lost business. Telemetry is a business tool that improves distributors’ and end users’ business operations, and also gives them a sense of security,” said Dave Zellen, Business Development Director for Cincinnati-based VMG.

“Since we are receiving real-time information, we can replenish cylinders to the manifold, in a timely manner without interruptions. By monitoring the usage we can also determine downstream leaks that can become a crisis at a later date. End users appreciate that distributors can seamlessly serve their beverage gas needs so they can concentrate on serving their customers.”

The systems also tremendously



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benefit distributors, said Zellen, by giving them insights that improve their operations and costs.

“By being able to monitor tank levels at various locations, we can go to customers when necessary, avoid needless trips, route our deliveries more efficiently and operate more effectively. Gas distributors who are using the telemetry systems have been reporting transportation savings of between 30-40% because of a better use of resources.”

Serving the beverage industry in the future

“At Harris, we continually look for ways to work with our distributor partners to help them add value and technical assistance with whatever is needed... and that includes 48-hour shipping from our manufacturing plant in Gainesville, Georgia and customizing systems,” said Trame.

“There are great new opportunities to serve the beverage industries and we would like to contribute to your success.” 