



10 minutes more with...William J. Kroll

10 Jan 2012 | By [Rob Cockerill \(URL=/rob-cockerill/227.bio\)](#)

Following previous chats with Hans Lonsain, Matthias Kuhn, Nicolas Viard and Diana Buss among others, take ten minutes out this month to catch-up with William J. Kroll, Chairman and CEO of MATHESON.

In our magazine interview, Kroll explained how we had actually interrupted his Christmas holiday vacation! He had taken time out during the holiday season to discuss the ethos within MATHESON, rigorous travelling, and some of the most interesting aspects of the gases business. Kroll was also enthusiastic about the prospect of his new Chairmanship of the CGA and his new role as President of IOMA.

Now, here in our web only follow-up, Kroll takes minutes more to explain his view of the North American gas business in 2012 and beyond, and experiences gained of working within a Japanese culture. As the largest subsidiary of Taiyo Nippon Sanso (TNSC), MATHESON is seen in many ways as something of a 'growth engine' for the whole group – and as Chairman and CEO, Kroll has spent a large amount of time with Japanese peers.

In fact, part of that extensive travelling before the festive break involved trips to Japan to fulfill TNSC corporate commitments. So let's pick up the trail and see what Kroll has to say about TNSC as a parent company...

TNSC is of course the parent group of MATHESON. What has been your experience working with Japanese friends and colleagues?

I believe the comments I made in your preceding questions give the answer to this current question. To best sum it up, I would say it has been a common strategic vision that we need to invest in those technologies and countries that will provide the TNSC Group with the largest opportunity for growth at an acceptable level of risk to the corporation.

We have a well-designed business model and the people and skills needed to bring this to fruition. We know we are at a key intersection of rapid change and opportunity, and I am pleased to say our parent, TNSC, has tapped us to be the growth engine for the entire group.

TNSC has supported us with all that we have needed to drive our expansion, both domestically and internationally.

What was the last book you read?

'Great by Choice' by Jim Collins. I love his books and had the opportunity to be with him person-to-person; I find his thinking both in business and life to be stimulating.

He is a very interesting person to be with. My next read is 'The Girl Who Played with Fire'.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I work out 3-5 times a week to try to stay in shape. My vices are boating and golf which both take time and are not complementary activities; however, I can put my clubs on the boat and get to some pretty nice courses.

What do you see shaping the industrial gases business in the future?

Given that part of the industrial gas business is driven by diatomic gas molecules that are a commodity, it is the application of these molecules that will be important. It will be the new application of these molecules that will bring customer value at the intersection of change and meet the needs of business in the future.

Those companies which sell solutions to problems and create customer value in the process will be successful. Another opportunity lies in the specialty molecules that have little in common with our industrial gases, other than our cross-selling initiatives.

These new gases and gaseous chemicals, along with application technology, new service strategies, and offerings,

will drive our business domestically and internationally.

How do you see the North American gases business developing in 2012 – and beyond?

The next two years in my mind will be both challenging and pivotal here in the US. With the presidential election on the horizon and a major swing in economic policy in the balance, things are uncertain to be sure.

Further, the outlook for the GDP to rise and 'float all boats' appears to be slim. I do see the frustration with economic policy holding us back as a nation; however, new sustainability technologies and fabrication technologies on the horizon could induce a climate for growth if collaborative efforts among the politicians can create sustainable jobs and balance the budget.

On the home front, an ageing population could provide for more growth opportunities in the medical business sector. I also think that in the Welding Gas Distributor business you will most likely see a continuing number of distributors in small to medium-size businesses selling off to one of the three majors with a distribution business.

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