

# Plant Services

## Water treatment at the plant level

In this Big Picture Interview, the effort to manage and protect water resources at the plant level is taking on a new urgency.

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Kevin Milici is the executive VP of marketing and technology for [Kurita America](#), a global leader in water solutions and one of the world's largest suppliers of water treatment equipment, chemistries, and services. The Kurita Group takes an integrated solutions approach to water treatment, looking for the root cause of a plant's real problem or inefficiency, and developing a site-specific remedy.

**PS: What kinds of contact does Kurita America have with customers like the Plant Services audience? Is it an advisory capacity where you introduce new technologies to these teams?**

**KM:** We have a very robust approach to the relationships we build at the plant level. That ranges everything from plant management, the plant manager, engineering, operations, environmental, health and safety, sustainability functions, maintenance services. To complement that, we do the same at the corporate level, where we're working with a corporation regarding a specific plant or an entire fleet. Those main kinds of functions are replicated at the headquarters level, if you will, and we try and manage our benefits that we provide and the interactions between both those groups.

We have a regulatory environment that is definitely getting tougher for our customers. I know there's been a lot of talk in the political environment about relaxing regulations and that sort of thing. I don't really see that happening in practice in the water space. If anything, I see it going the opposite direction because of the influence at the state level.

- **Read "[Water management: When there's not a drop to spare](#)"**

There are and will be increased regulatory challenges in the acquisition, use, and discharge of water, which isn't getting any easier. We have sustainability issues and problems with water scarcity all over North America and the world. Over the next

decade or so, water is not going to be the “don’t think about it, it’s a given” kind of a resource that it once was. It is, in certain parts of the world and in this, a precious commodity, and the availability, the cost of acquiring it, and the quality of it will shift.



The reason I raise those issues is that as we talk with those functional managers that we’re discussing, the whole attitude, attention to, inquisitiveness of our customers and prospective customers is a pretty steep upward-swinging curve. It was always strong from an operational point of view, and protecting and ensuring asset integrity over time or heat transfer efficiency, for example, but now it’s got a whole new twist. And that twist is, (water quality) is getting the attention it deserves because of all the drivers that are out there.

**PS:** You know, it’s really interesting you mentioned the issue of water quality and freshwater availability. I don’t mention this very often because I think people would find it strange, but I waited to start a family until I resettled back here in Chicago where we are next to Lake Michigan, and that issue of water is not going to be the same issue as it is elsewhere in this country. It mattered a great deal to me to give my kids a head start in a place where easy access to fresh water was one less concern, and I do believe that concern is going to grow.

**KM:** Oh, no doubt about it. For a business like ours, we’re very focused on corporate social responsibility, and that whole issue really plays into our equation. You may have heard a lot about purposeful branding: that people, and not only in their personal lives, but increasingly in the B2B environment, buy from companies because of what they do and what their philosophy is towards certain societal issues, right. About 30 years ago, the leadership of Kurita Water Industries in Japan formulated the following company philosophy: “Study the properties of water, master them, and we will create an environment in which man and nature are in harmony.”

- **Read "Water recycling: Waste not, want not"**

I've been in this business a long time, and I saw those words for the first time about two years ago, and it really inspired me. I mean, that is our mission, and we're finding that in those discussions with our customers or prospective customers, there's an increasing sensitivity to, respect for, and curiosity on how that translates to my plant or my company or my unit operation, whether it's wastewater, generating steam, or cooling.

Corporate social responsibility, when it comes to issues such as environmental sustainability, is not a zero-sum game with growing a profitable business.