

# Moving Confidently into the Future

BACKED BY STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH BLACKMER® AND SACIGAS, L'AUTOGAS OROBICA ENHANCES ITS POSITION AS A LEADING LPG DISTRIBUTOR IN NORTHERN ITALY

*By Jean-Marc Bernard*



Front entrance at Maniago, Italy, plant.

L'Autogas Orobica built this 400 cubic meter LPG storage facility in Maniago in 2009 to serve Italy's northeastern region.

Many factors go into the success of a company in any type of industry. Among these are intuition, anticipation, adaptation, commitment, and faith...to name a few. When a business subsequently experiences success it leads to the creation of another trait found in leading businesses – confidence. Namely, the confidence that what you do is what the customer wants and if you keep doing it, no matter the circumstances that success will continue to grow.

Since 1958, L'Autogas Orobica S.p.A., from its headquarters in Gorlago in the Italian province of Bergamo, about 48 kilometers (30 miles) northeast of Milan, has been distributing LPG to its residential, agricultural, and industrial customers. Most of this LPG is delivered in small tanks and cylinders. Over the years, L'Autogas Orobica has built a reputation for prompt deliveries and top-notch customer service, traits that have helped it continually grow.

“We try to be known for our reliability, efficiency, speed in distribution, and attention to safety,” said Stefano Rossi, General Manager of L'Autogas Orobica and a member of the company's board of directors.

Thanks to this business model, in the 53 years that it has been in business, L'Autogas Orobica has grown into one of the largest LPG distributors in northern Italy. Currently, the company has 27 satellite sales offices spread throughout the regions of Lombardy, Veneto, Friuli, Trentino, and Piemonte, and up to the borders of France, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia. To service this widespread customer base, over the years L'Autogas Orobica has strategically added storage capacity. In fact, a recent expansion to its Gorlago central headquarters now gives the facility a storage capacity of 1,300 cubic meters of LPG. In the past decade, L'Autogas Orobica also added a second storage facility, this one with 250 cubic meters of capacity, in the nearby town of Paderno, near Brescia.

But it was in 2009 that L'Autogas Orobica made its boldest move to stake its claim as one of the preeminent distributors of LPG in northern Italy, one that required the utmost confidence in its abilities, as well as in those companies with whom it partners for LPG service and equipment.

## Making The Best Of The Worst

Simply put, there were many better years than 2009 to decide to sink capital into a new venture. The global economic recession was wreaking havoc with industries around the world and “retrenchment,” not “expansion,” was the watchword for many businesses as they rode out the ongoing economic storm. Not L'Autogas Orobica, though. In 2009, the company decided that it would make its boldest move yet, building a new 400 cubic meter LPG storage facility in faraway Maniago, a small town in far northeastern Italy within sight of the Alps and a short drive from the borders of neighboring Austria and Slovenia.

Despite the inherent economic risks, Rossi and L'Autogas Orobica were confident – based on the past success of the company – that the move was the right one at the right time. To help ensure that it was, L'Autogas Orobica turned to Sacigas s.r.l., based in Assago, Italy, just southwest of Milan, and since 1964 a developer, manufacturer, and distributor of equipment for use in LPG service.

“Sacigas provides us with pumps and compressors for our LPG depots, equipment, and accessories for our small tanks and cylinders, and any after-sales service we may need,” said Rossi. “They are very professional, technically skilled, and always ready when we need them. They give us the right balance of price and quality, competence and the after-sales service that we need.”

Since the early 1990s, Sacigas has also been an Authorized Distributor of pumps and compressors that have been designed for LPG service for Blackmer®, Grand Rapids, MI, USA.

“Since we began working with Blackmer, we have used their pumps for installations on trucks and at bulk plants and service stations,” said Celso Maioli, Technical Manager for Sacigas. “Also, we have tested Blackmer pumps in special installations on tanks and have found that they work successfully for filling cars at service stations. Since 1990, we have also used Blackmer compressors and today we have many customers who are satisfied with them.”

Therefore, when approached by L'Autogas Orobica about the equipment that would be needed for its new storage

and distribution facility in Maniago, Sacigas had no trouble recommending – and L'Autogas Orobica has no qualms in accepting – Blackmer pumps and compressors for its new operation.



Paolo Carniel, manager of L'Autogas Orobica's Maniago plant.

## The Right Solution

One of the key pieces of equipment in use for LPG transfer and vapor recovery at the Maniago facility is the LB602 Single-Stage, Oil-Free Reciprocating Gas Compressor. The LB602 is perfect for L'Autogas Orobica's Maniago operation. All Blackmer LB compressors create a low-pressure area in the compression chamber when the piston moves from the highest point of the stroke to the lowest point, forcing the gaseous product (which is at a higher pressure) to move into the compression chamber. The gas is then displaced when the piston moves to the top of the stroke. This pressurization is critical in LPG transfer and results in consistent, reliable operation. The compressors are also capable of recovering vapors, which can add an equivalent of 3% capacity to every railcar or tank-truck load.

Additionally, the Maniago plant employs a 1-inch Blackmer LG1 Sliding Vane Pump in a line-stripping operation that removes condensation from the LPG vapor lines. Two Blackmer pumps are also used to load LPG transports





(From left) Celso Maioli, Mauro Fitti, and Luigi Veronelli of Sacigas s.r.l., based in Assago, Italy.

that frequent the Maniago plant. These pumps have been designed to deliver maximum performance and reliability in the most severe LPG-handling conditions. L'Autogas Orobica installed two compressors and transfer pumps at its facility, with one serving merely as the backup. However, they have not had any reason to use the backup equipment since the others have performed flawlessly in their two years of service.

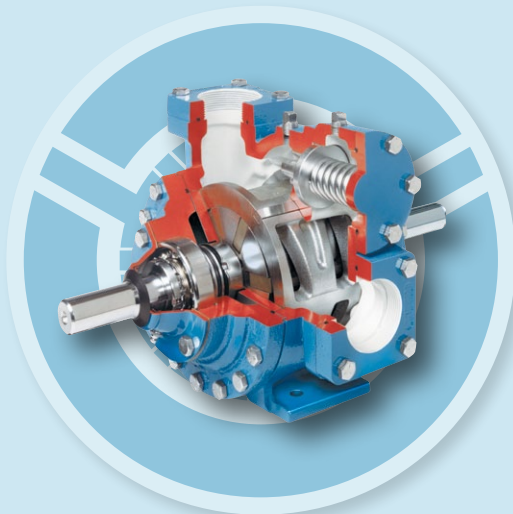
“We have been using Blackmer products for decades and the quality has always been high,” said Rossi. “They are also very reliable, making them the perfect choice for our new Maniago LPG plant.”

## Sacigas Meets A Need

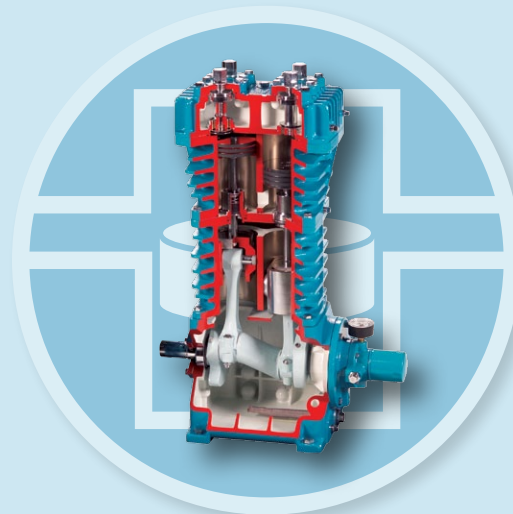
In 1994, Italy put into place new regulations for the monitoring of LPG storage-tank installations at service stations and the level of response that would be required to any accidents or spills at those sites. As these regulations were about to go into effect, Sacigas s.r.l., Assago, Italy, a distributor and servicer of LPG equipment, presented to the Italian government and Ministry of the Interior a safety plan that would satisfy the tenets of the new regulations.

That plan included the use of Blackmer® 3-inch LGL3 Sliding Vane Pumps and LB361 Reciprocating Gas Compressors to clean up or contain any LPG that may escape during an accident or tank leak. Liking what they saw, the Ministry accepted Sacigas’ plan and today 18 counties in Italy have Blackmer pump and compressor equipment at the ready for use during any LPG emergency situations or accidents.

“The 18 counties are equipped with Blackmer LGL3 pumps and Blackmer LB361 compressors,” said Celso Maioli, Technical Manager for Sacigas. “Now, when the Ministry of the Interior has a new decree, they ask specifically for Blackmer pumps and compressors.”



LGL3 Sliding Vane Pump



LB361 Reciprocating Gas Compressor



Blackmer's LB602 Single-Stage, Oil-Free Reciprocating Gas Compressor is one of the key pieces of equipment in use for LPG transfer and vapor recovery at the Maniago plant. The plant also uses Blackmer pumps.

The result is a large, clean, well-organized LPG storage facility that helps set a new standard in LPG handling and distribution and will play a key role in keeping L'Autogas Orobica one of the foremost LPG suppliers in all of northern Italy.

## Conclusion

Decades of success have helped L'Autogas Orobica build the confidence necessary to make bold moves in a difficult market, even when the economic conditions don't appear to be conducive to such risk-taking. But when the company decided it was time to add a third distribution facility, it was full speed ahead, no matter the state of the global economy.

That decision was made easier for L'Autogas Orobica because of the confidence it had built over the years with Sacigas, along with Blackmer's long and successful track record in the LPG market. Taking all of this into consideration, the company's choice to construct the Maniago LPG storage facility was ultimately a very successful one.

"It's important to be able to give the customer what the customer needs because, in many cases, the customer might not know exactly what he needs," said Maioli. "You need to suggest the right machine and when you do suggest the right machine, they are satisfied. That's why we have no problem suggesting Blackmer, because the customers are always satisfied."

---

*Jean-Marc Bernard is a Regional Manager in Southern Europe for Energy & Transport for Blackmer®, Grand Rapids, MI, USA. He can be reached at +33 1 55 39 0740 or [Jean-Marc.Bernard@pumpspsg.com](mailto:Jean-Marc.Bernard@pumpspsg.com). For more information on Blackmer's full line of pumps and compressors, please go to [www.blackmer.com](http://www.blackmer.com) or call (616) 241-1611. Blackmer is a member of the Pump Solutions Group (PSG™), Downers Grove, IL, USA, which is composed of seven leading pump companies – Almatec®, Blackmer®, EnviroGear®, Griswold™, Mouvex®, Neptune™, and Wilden®. You can find more information on PSG at [www.pumpspsg.com](http://www.pumpspsg.com).*



[www.blackmer.com](http://www.blackmer.com)

**World Headquarters**

1809 Century Avenue SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-1530 USA  
T 616.241.1611 F 616.241.3752

