

primarily focused on cost reduction and capital efficiency. The projects include elements of organizational design, business process definition, process automation and metrics. Individual projects vary in terms of time to execute, ranging from one year for simple quick-fix efforts to five years for more complex infrastructure efforts. A structured process has been created to ensure that each project follows common milestones and delivers value over its lifecycle, with a governance process that oversees the portfolio to ensure that time-phased trade-offs between cost and benefits are proactively managed. The project portfolio is actively covered by a dedicated transformation office to ensure that projects are managed from inception to execution to protect the long-term value of the transformation.

### **Competition**

Despite consolidation activities in past years, the markets for our products remain highly competitive, with primary competitive drivers being price, reputation, project management, timeliness of delivery, quality, proximity to service centers and technical expertise, as well as contractual terms and previous installation history. In the pursuit of large capital projects, competitive drivers and competition vary depending on the industry and products involved. Industries experiencing slow growth generally tend to have a competitive environment more heavily influenced by price due to supply outweighing demand and price competition tends to be more significant for original equipment orders than aftermarket services. Considering the current forecasts for 2019, pricing for original equipment orders may continue to be a particularly influential competitive factor. The unique competitive environments in each of our three business segments are discussed in more detail under the "Business Segments" heading below.

In the aftermarket portion of our business, we compete against large, well-established national and global competitors and, in some markets, against regional and local companies. In the oil and gas and chemical industries, the primary competitors for aftermarket services tend to be customers' own in-house capabilities. In the nuclear power generation industry, we possess certain competitive advantages due to our "N Stamp" certification, which is a prerequisite to serve customers in that industry, as well as our considerable base of proprietary knowledge. Aftermarket competition for standardized products is aggressive due to the existence of common standards allowing for easier replacement or repair of the installed products.

In the sale of aftermarket products and services, we benefit from our large installed base of pumps, valves and seals, which continually require maintenance, repair and replacement parts due to the nature of the products and the conditions under which they operate. Timeliness of delivery, quality and the proximity of service centers are important customer considerations when selecting a provider for aftermarket products and services. In geographic regions where we are locally positioned to provide a quick response, customers have traditionally relied on us, rather than our competitors, for aftermarket products relating to our highly-engineered and customized products, although we are seeing increased competition in this area.

Generally, our customers attempt to reduce the number of vendors from which they purchase, thereby reducing the size and diversity of their supply chain. Although vendor reduction programs could adversely affect our business, we have been successful in establishing long-term supply agreements with a number of customers. While the majority of these agreements do not provide us with exclusive rights, they can provide us a "preferred" status with our customers and thereby increase opportunities to win future business. We also utilize our LifeCycle Advantage program to establish fee-based contracts to manage customers' aftermarket requirements. These programs provide an opportunity to manage the customer's installed base and expand the business relationship with the customer.

Our ability to use our portfolio of products, solutions and services to meet customer needs is a competitive strength. Our market approach is to create value for our customers throughout the life cycle of their investments in flow control management. We continue to explore and develop potential new offerings in conjunction with our customers. In the early phases of project design, we endeavor to create value in optimizing the selection of equipment for the customer's specific application, as we are capable of providing technical expertise on product and system capabilities even outside the scope of our specific products, solutions and services. After the equipment is constructed and delivered to the customer's site, we continue to create value through our aftermarket capabilities by optimizing the performance of the equipment over its operational life. Our skilled service personnel can provide these aftermarket services for our products, as well as many competitors' products, within the installed base. This value is further enhanced by the global reach of our QRCs and, when combined with our other solutions for our customers' flow control management needs, allows us to create value for our customers during all phases of the capital and operating expenditure cycles.