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# Southern California Rep Marks 75th Anniversary



*Jon Crowley (standing) and his father Paul are the second and third generation of Crowleys who have operated the 75-year-old Charles P. Crowley Company in Irwindale, California.*

When asked if there's any secret to his agency's longevity and success, Jon Crowley good-naturedly offers, "We just keep showing up for work and doing the job," or "Perhaps the Crowleys were just unemployable elsewhere." But there's a lot more to it when a manufacturers' representative agency can boast a track record of success like the CP Crowley Company can. More to the point, according to Crowley, "We've successfully adapted to the changes in the marketplace."

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The Irwindale, California, agency is marking its 75th anniversary this year.

The Charles P. Crowley Company, established in 1932, is a family-owned manufacturers' representative firm. It was founded by Charles P. Crowley Sr., a Stone & Webster engineer from Boston, Massachusetts. Crowley, who was sent west in 1924 to build the first Edison steam plant in Long Beach, California, founded the business and operated it for several years as a single-person representative agency near downtown Los Angeles. The headquarters for the business remained in Los Angeles until 1955, when it moved to the City of Commerce. The location remained there until 1995, when it relocated to San Dimas. Finally, the agency settled into its present location in 2004 in Irwindale, California — just 21 miles north-east of its original location.

Management of the agency passed to Paul Crowley in 1962, and to Jon Crowley in 1993.

The firm's original emphasis was the representation of East Coast manufacturers for steam, flow and water-treatment-related products for the power, refinery and water/waste industries. According to Crowley, "The agency made direct calls on end users and partici-

pated in extensive specification work with consulting engineers."

Returning to the subject of changing with the needs of the market, he continued, "Our sales emphasis gradually shifted from being exclusively industrial (through the 1950s) to an even industrial/municipal balance as Southern California grew."

A testament to the agency's longevity in the Southern California marketplace is the fact that it has outlived every manufacturer it originally represented 75 years ago.

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### Agency Profile

A visit to the firm's web site ([www.cpcrowley.com](http://www.cpcrowley.com)) provides a snapshot of the rep firm. According to information appearing there:

"We are an exclusive manufacturers' representative for several leading equipment manufacturers in the municipal water and wastewater, industrial, petrochemical, power and OEM markets.

"In most cases, we also serve as a stocking distributor for our manufacturers' products, spare parts and allied accessories.

"Our sales concentration remains evenly balanced between the municipal and industrial markets.

"Our territorial coverage for representation includes Southern California and southern Nevada.



*Some of the products that serve the waste treatment, chemical feed, chlorination and water/wastewater equipment markets are seen in the company's 7,000-sq.-ft. warehouse located within the agency's headquarters location.*

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"Municipal coverage includes end users at water and wastewater plants, consulting engineers and contractors.

"Industrial coverage includes engineering contractors, general industrial accounts and resellers, both locally and worldwide.

"CPC Systems provides additional opportunities for our customers via 'value-added' packages."

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### Value-Add

It's on the subject of value-add that Crowley stops for a moment to explain what — in addition to its rich, 75-year history — allows his agency to stand apart from the competition. "When it comes to discussing value-add," he says, "I

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*A great deal of agency's historical paperwork remains to this day. Jon Crowley noted with amusement that one of the agency's early tax returns showed a payment of 79 cents for an entire year.*

look at it from a couple of points of view.

- "First, given the fact that the product lines we represent are indigenous to the customers and markets we serve, we realized we had to do something to set ourselves apart. One of the things we've done is to provide pre-wired, value-added packaging of our products.

- "The second thing we've done is to provide a service department that takes care of inside sales, engineering, design, application engineering, etc.

"The existence of this department is actually an outgrowth of how we conducted business years ago on the West Coast. At that time, there was no fax, computers or e-mail, and we were pretty much on our own when it came to representing our East Coast principals. Since communication was obviously limited, we were self-sufficient and had to develop our own expertise on our product lines. I'll admit that all that has changed over the years as manufacturers now are in close touch, but we've maintained our service department to our and our customers' benefits."

If manufacturers' proximity and involvement with the rep firm are two things that have changed over the years, one constant for CP Crowley has been the need to meet the challenge of finding enough time in the workday to get everything done. "To meet that challenge," explains Crowley, "we're proactive in everything we do. We make sure we're in constant communication with our manufacturers and customers and persistent in our efforts to locate and explore new business opportunities. And, despite the fact we now have all those communication tools at our disposal, we still realize that being a rep is all about anticipating, identifying and solving problems. To that end, we make sure all of our 12 employees know what their roles are."

While Crowley admits that he's not quite sure on all the activities that might be planned for the agency's 75th anniversary, one thing he is sure about is that "If you come back and see us in just a couple of years, you'll see that we've continued to grow and to take advantage of all the opportunities that are available to us." □

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