

# From tracking cars to monitoring tanks

Otodata's wise take on telemetry

By Molly Burgess



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In an economic landscape that is feeling the crunch of supply chain challenges, seamless gas supply management for industrial gas companies has arguably never been more important. Amid various shortages, from carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) to helium, businesses have had to invest in their assets when it comes to gas. And telemetry has, not surprisingly, been to the fore.

Along the way, even some longstanding telemetry companies have pivoted their business models. One example is Ototata, operating out of Montreal, Canada. This is a company that started off tracking and tracing stolen cars, but is now quite a different beast, with its growing global footprint dedicated to the industrial gas space.

Despite its Canadian roots, however, the Internet of Things (IoT) specialist has now established a new US hub – in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In January this year, Ototata opened its new 12,000 sq ft distribution facility in the city to bolster its customer service capabilities south of the US-Canadian border. “The new facility has come a long way since it opened. We’re already starting to fill it out and even outgrow it,” Eric Wise, Vice-President of

Industrial Solutions at Ototata, tells *gasworld*.

This was no surprise – and Ototata is prepared, says Wise. “We knew we’d outgrow the facility and that’s why we chose to lease the building that we have.”

Wise notes that by taking out the back wall of the warehouse, Ototata can easily double the size of the building and further boost its capabilities.

“I don’t think these are imminent plans, but they’re almost definitely set to happen at some point. Our timelines rarely slow down and often speed up. We thought we’d out-grow this site in two and a half years’ time, but now I think we will need more space by the end of this year.”

“The location is already home to the vast majority of Ototata’s business,” Wise adds. And even as the company looks to pursue other geographies, Ototata says this US hub will remain key to the industrial gas and liquid petroleum gas (LPG) arms of the business.

## Global growth

It is only two years since Wise himself joined the Ototata team after the company acquired Wise Telemetry

back in April 2021. The purchase was Ototata’s first acquisition and gave the company a big leg up in the industrial gas space.

“Ototata started to explore tank monitoring in 2015,” Wise notes. “This segment of the business was then pushed forward in 2019 and throughout the pandemic. In parallel, Wise Telemetry was starting to offer similar technologies across the US, with some business in South America. So acquiring Wise and then merging the two operations made perfect sense for industrial gases.”

Founded in Pittsburgh in 2014, Wise Telemetry established itself as a leading provider of remote monitoring devices and services for the industrial gas industry to cover every aspect of gas distribution, from tanker trucks and bulk tanks to dewars and cylinders. Its acquisition gave Ototata new capabilities.

Recently Ototata started acquiring companies beyond North America.

“In 2021 we acquired a company called Wireless Application Corporation (WAC),” says Wise. WAC is based

out of Israel, and does a lot of business in South America, covering Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. It also covers a lot of Central America, including Mexico and Panama.”

In 2022 Ototata then acquired the telemetry division of AUIT. Based in Poland, AUIT supplies the global market with solutions related to the automation and robotization of production processes, IT, and the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT).

These acquisitions bring Ototata up to the present day, with offices in Montreal, Pittsburgh, Israel, Brazil, Chile, and Poland. But there are more geographies that Ototata is now eyeing.

“Right now, we cover all of the Americas and Europe, with a small presence in Asia,” Wise confirms. “But Australia is of great interest to us. We’re looking to expand there.”

## Shifting demands

Ototata’s growth into new regions brings different elements of the industrial gas supply chain into focus.



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For example, Wise explains that there is a much larger opportunity related to packaged gases in Europe than in the US. On the flip side, the US presents a much larger opportunity in the bulk gas space.

“We have a lot of demand for bulk gas, but I think demand in the packaged gas space is going to grow in the next few years. We’ve already noted this trend and have hired a new salesperson to deal specifically with packaged gas requests,” says Wise.

He continues, “We’re also seeing a lot of interest in manifolding. It is notoriously hard to monitor individual cylinders, not to mention expensive, so companies are now manifolding them together. This means their assets operate like a mini bulk tank, rather than lots of cylinders.”

Another recent focus for Ototata has been its partnership with Luxembourg-based Rotarex.

“Rotarex has released a new capacitance probe for accurate measurement. This product has been on the market before, called a C-Stic, but they’ve recently re-designed it so it’s more cost effective and accurate. You could say that, if Rotarex made the car, we’ve put our own engine in it. Ototata has designed custom hardware for the updated product to offer a complete end-to-end solution that covers a large part of the industrial gas market.”

## A team for LPG and IG

In addition to an expanded global reach, each acquisition has seen many new team members added. And, with each company being different, not everyone is familiar with the ever-changing industrial gas market.

Speaking on the acquisition of WAC, Wise notes that the team was mostly focused on the LPG space. “The [WAC] team certainly had an LPG focus, but we’re now using those employees to attack our industrial gas requests as we continue to grow,” Wise says.



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Lucky for Ototata, the skills can be quite easily transferred across the two markets.

“The basic idea behind the sensing and transmitting of data across the two industries is similar. Across both markets, our end-users want to make sure their product doesn’t run out and they want optimal delivery,” Wise explains.

“However, there are a few differences when it comes to measuring what’s in the tank,” he adds. “To best measure the product, our team need to consider the product, the scale, its environment, and the required supply, but these differences are relatively minor in the grand scheme of things.”

And it seems like the future teams will also have a heavy focus on the industrial gas space, as Ototata continues to anticipate accelerated growth in the market. “I think there is a good chance that we’ll be offering some further services to the IG customers,” says Wise.

“We are looking at field services and installation offerings. There’s a lot of demand out there and we want to meet it in the best possible way.” **GW**