

# Powerful Protection

Having the right people on board and an extensive knowledge base has seen Natural Power Solutions achieve great success in the power protection industry.

Images by Scott Ehler

“The number one thing we focus on now is the concept of providing power solutions.”

- Mark Sewell

Natural Power Solutions (NPS) has been providing power, surge, and lightning protection to clients in the corporate, industrial, and government sectors for 20 years. Its qualified technical expertise and well-rounded product and service offerings has grounded it well to be a leading independent player in the market.

NPS was incorporated in 1994 and has grown to have a presence in all Australian states and territories. In addition, it recently opened an office in Auckland, New Zealand, to further expand its reach. Working closely with key global UPS (uninterruptible power supply) vendors and specialised product suppliers, such as global firm Eaton Industries, NPS is able to provide customisable solutions that fit in with the needs of its clients. Whether it is the industries of health and medicine, mining, security, or information and communications

technology needing help, NPS can deliver results.

Founder and Managing Director, Mark Sewell, has an extensive background in the fields of uninterruptible power supplies and lightning protection. After completing various degrees and courses in electronics, he joined a UPS and lightning protection firm before working overseas for several years. When he returned home, an opportunity arose to team up with a like-minded friend who had just been made redundant from a computer company. The duo subsequently launched NPS as a distribution business that worked by buying small UPS systems and on-selling them to computer shops and electrical wholesalers. It operated like this until about 2007 when it was decided that NPS would transition out of distribution and move into solutions selling.

“Solutions selling is about identifying clients with power

problems or requirements, and putting together a puzzle for them,” Mark explains. “That could be UPS, or battery backup systems, computer room cooling, power factor correction, generators, lightning protection—and then all of the distribution of power through power units, racks, and the output of the UPS. When we first started, we expanded by having partners in each state, almost like a franchise arrangement; then we bought back the shareholdings, and it has since become a single company. Every state is different and has different types of clients.”

Two years ago, Mark purchased his business partner’s shareholding in NPS before re-strategising and changing the go-to-market model. “The number one thing we focus on now is the concept of providing power solutions. So, instead of my team just selling a battery backup system or a UPS for the data centre, we look at everything on the input side of the UPS, like the >



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cabling that goes to the UPS to power it up. I get my team to develop a solution and do an all-encompassing sale.

“There used to be seven major manufacturers in our industry, and there has been several acquisitions and mergers leaving three main ones. With less competition, the service generally gets worse, and I think you will find that that’s our differentiation in the market—a high level of pre- and post-sales service.

“We are not the manufacturer; we are the solutions provider, or the solutions partner. We act like the consultant; we will obtain any type of product, or any brand of product, and we will put it into the bill of material for the solution. It is quite possible that we may sell four different brands of UPS to one group or one company—but, they are not buying the brand of UPS from us; they are utilising the services of NPS. Therefore, it is not really your standard distribution model where we are a distributor and reseller of a certain brand; it is more of a solutions-based approach that we have.”

Another focus for NPS is to reduce its clients’ energy footprint. “I guess the industry as a whole hasn’t changed terribly much,” Mark says. “A UPS has battery backup inside in case of power failure, and it is still the same technology as 20 years ago; so, nothing has really changed there. What has changed is how we manage and monitor the load, or the equipment that is plugged into the UPS. You can remotely turn things on and off, and look at how much power is being consumed by individual items. Then you can map that and work out how to turn things off to reduce your actual energy footprint.”

Mark believes that having a great team of people has been a critical component to the success of NPS. Highly trained in sales and value-adding, his staff understand the needs of clients, and are able to respond quickly with appropriate solutions. The power protection industry can be quite complex and technical at times, but

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a knowledgeable crew can help to navigate that space effectively for clients.

“We certainly have the right people on board at NPS, and the knowledge that we hold here is pretty valuable,” he says. “I couldn’t do it just by myself, so I have got to have people that really do understand the go-to market of all of the vendors, plus the requirements of our clients. That is the key. In terms of training them, well, we can get online technical training from vendors, so that is very simple—but the real training is training the sales team for project management. They need to know how to put the puzzle together for clients. Just buying and selling things is quite easy, but actually putting all the pieces together in a puzzle is a bit trickier. That is something that we do in-house, so there is an element of consultancy.”

With a great reputation in the Australian marketplace already, and a recent expansion across the pond into New Zealand, NPS looks set to continue its success well into the future. Mark says the business’s mission will continue to be all about identifying, solving, and implementing solutions for its customers to protect them from any problems relating to power.

“I certainly don’t have a finish line as such,” he notes. “I am not looking for any immediate exit strategy or anything like that. I have just purchased my business partner’s shareholding after 17 years of operation; so, let’s just say that we are moving into NPS version two. We’re pretty much running it as a new business, and it is very much solution driven. The types of sales are going from the \$1,000 to \$5,000 mark all the way through to the \$30,000 to \$100,000 mark on average. It’s exciting times ahead.”



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