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Not Just a Blanket Approach

As Regional Sales Director EMEA (Europe Middle East Africa) for Trelleborg's printing solutions operation, Matthias Horn oversees supply to a customer base that is one of the operation's widest ranging. In the following article he explains how Trelleborg successfully supplies users with such a diversity of needs.

"In a manufacturer/customer relationship, you have to get the balance right and when it's not, you have to be strong enough to quickly correct whatever is putting it out of alignment. There are a significant number of complex elements that are put on those 'scales' – having the right product with the correct quality, ensuring you can deliver on time to the necessary geographical area, plus backing this up with first class sales and technical support.

"Of course, also going into the mix are price and versatility, as well as understanding an individual client's needs, both now and in the near future. We put a huge amount of effort into gathering information about what printers need, how the market is changing and how new technologies might impact on the buying process. This has resulted in Trelleborg pioneering the development of offset blankets in many areas. For instance, the company's solutions for use with the latest low-energy UV systems have been highly successful.

"We are aided in seeing trends emerging through our global network of manufacturing facilities, employees, dealers and distributors. This allows us to identify something happening in the industry in one part of the world that may become popular in another region. As a key player in offset blankets, it's important that we also keep our eye on the 'bigger picture' such as attitudes towards the environment.

"An increasing number of corporations expect the printers they use to meet high standards when it comes to sustainable issues and printers in turn look to their suppliers, particularly those of consumables, to rise to the challenge. For a long time Trelleborg has implemented a philosophy of being environmentally friendly. Within Trelleborg's printing solutions operation this has led to the implementation of production facilities for offset blankets that do



not require the use of solvents. Our manufacturing facilities in countries such as China and Brazil have led the way in this.”

Trelleborg has been helped in its ability to create innovative solutions by the extensive research and development department at its Italian headquarters in Lodi Vecchio. The highly experienced engineers based here constantly monitor feedback from subsidiaries and distributors and use this data to provide guidance for the direction of future development work.

“This has resulted in a portfolio of offset blankets that is unrivalled, with new products being launched regularly. In recent months this has included Vulcan Metal Times, a metal-back blanket for the newspaper sector. Although many European newspaper circulations are declining, Trelleborg has continued to invest in research to improve cost efficiencies in newspaper production.

“Bringing new products to market is an on-going process. This extends beyond offset blankets and our Axcyl flexo sleeve range leads the industry in its field. We’ve also been pushing forward the boundaries in other areas, such as the use of polyurethane rollers in the production of tissue-based items.

“We can only achieve all of this because of the willingness of Trelleborg’s management to invest significantly in R&D and manufacturing facilities to ensure the highest levels of innovation and quality. During the last two years there have been significant enhancements to the production facilities at Lodi Vecchio, and this has raised the bar even further in terms of precision, quality and consistency of the offset blankets made there.

“At the same time, the company has an extremely impressive record for investing in people and goes to great lengths to train employees so that they are the best in their sector. This is why the Trelleborg sales and technical personnel who support our dealers, distributors and customers around the world, are so highly regarded within the printing industry. The degree of knowledge and experience they have ensures first class support at a local level.



“You cannot approach European printers with the same package of products and services that you would with those in Africa or the Middle East. Their needs are different and suppliers need to understand this. However, there are plenty of common issues. All printers are under pressure to achieve ever greater efficiency and the offset blanket plays a vital role in allowing a press operator to produce a job profitably.

“Printers appreciate being able to see demonstrations and speak to experts at events held near to them and we are increasingly taking part in joint supplier events, conferences, exhibitions and open days. Printers merely need to make contact with their local Trelleborg printing solutions dealer to find out what is coming up in their area.”

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