SUHNER®

A new wave of business

A Dorset engineering firm have secured a raft of new business after dipping their toes in new waters to feed future growth.

Iracroft are renowned for supplying the major OEMs of earth moving and agricultural equipment with rigid tube assemblies for high-pressure hydraulic pneumatic and coolant applications.

Last year the 220-strong company based at Blandford Forum took a new route into the gas treatment and marine industries working in stainless steel; something not done before but it's been a remarkable success story having grown from nothing to a business worth over £100,000 in six months.

The tube specialist produces between 1,500 and 1,800 different parts a month, which placed on a weighing machine adds up to 170 tonnes of piping ranging from 5mm to 76mm in diameters and up to five metres in length.

They are a crucial supplier of hydraulic tube assemblies for the market leaders of construction equipment but any niche market is also self-limiting as Iracroft business development manager Tom Maddocks explained. "It was a real challenge for us but the company needed to explore opportunities in other sectors that could utilise the same technologies and manufacturing processes.

"Our reputation and capability in delivering within extremely tight lead times has counted a lot. For example, in extreme cases we can take an order in the morning and the assembly will be ready for dispatch later that day, whereas lead times of four to six weeks are the industry standard," he added.

One reason is because apart from volume components, virtually nothing is outsourced. From delivery of the raw materials onwards, Iracroft oversees every aspect of the process from cutting through to finishing – three years ago the company invested in its own zinc plating facility nearby in Poole.



JUST THE JOB …Iracroft are in no doubt that the more their stainless steel business flourishes the more they will draw on a variety of Suhner tools like this UBC 10R belt file for polishing hard-to-reach areas.

Not only does it give unparalleled control over quality – the plant is approved to ISO 9001:2000 standard – it also enables Iracroft to react extremely quickly.

Customers have sought out Iracroft specifically for its fast response times. "Say someone ordered a standard excavator 12 months ago, that order can be modified at any time up to delivery. If a customer then decides at the last minute that they want a specific attachment, then that assembly with all its supporting fittings must be incorporated very quickly if the product is due for imminent delivery," explained Tom.

It is a plus point that has certainly impressed buyers at the higher end of the leisure marine industry where ladders, gates, hand rails and radar masts are just a small selection of the hundreds of applications for stainless steel tubing.

"The finish is where customers make their biggest demands – hence why we have gone to Suhner. If you build in stainless you must be able to understand each polishing stage of your manufacturing process in-house. It's vital, absolutely vital.

"That's the difference between us and other manufacturers who use independent metal finishers and is our advantage in the long term."

UBC 10R BELT FILE



- ▶ Ideal for cleaning and removing burrs, radius grinding, blending work in difficult-to-reach areas
- ▶ Interchangeable steel contact arms
- ▶ Weighing just 1.8kg, a high performance machine that will run at between 4,000 and 10,000 rpm
- ▶ Ergonomic design ensures fatigue-free operation
- ▶ 500W motor with integrated overload cut-out
- ▶ Integrated fully variable speed electronic maintains selected speed even under load
- ▶ Power tools with a difference – the right size and the right speed range for your application
- ▶ Belt size 3-19mm x 520mm. Machine is supplied with 1 contact arm type KA 25/9 for 3 x 520mm belts
- ▶ Belts are available in zirconia, aluminum oxide, non-woven surface conditioning.

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In addition to a need for a uniform appearance, a buffed surface can save hundreds of pounds of weight over a painted surface. With the cost of fuel at all-time highs, any weight savings will translate easily into significant cost savings over the life of the airplane.

Adds Ulrich Ruetsch: "For whatever industry fabricators are in and for whatever abrasive, grinding, deburring or polishing job, Application News details the best solution for quality, productivity and cost requirements.

"A fabricator without knowledge and an understanding of grinding, sanding, and polishing tools that enable him to achieve perfect surfaces is like an individual without a memory.

"We offer more solutions in one place than you could find travelling the country and we recommend what is best for you and not just what is in our abrasives catalogue."

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