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PLUS: BIG INVESTMENT IN ROAD AND RAIL ASSETS ★ DISTRIBUTORS PREPARE FOR THE WORST
★ TERMINALS TRIM ASSETS TO MEET CHANGING DEMAND ★ SLOW RECOVERY FOR SHIPOWNERS

Turning time into money

PUMPS Operators are looking to their equipment suppliers to help them operate more efficiently and reduce downtime. Hervé de Chambure* explains how Blackmer's STX pumps are helping optimise H&S Group's delivery operations in the UK

The bane of any business that relies on transport vehicles to deliver commodities to the end-user – whether the product is molasses, cement, LPG or bottles of milk – is an inefficient use of time. This might be the period vehicles are not on the road making deliveries, due to equipment failures or maintenance needs, or the amount of time needed to load or unload a transport trailer. Transport companies that do not make the best use of their assets' time, both on the road and at the loading dock, can be harmed on a number of levels. This can be elevated equipment costs, excessive maintenance charges, inability to meet promised delivery times or unacceptable transfer times, any one of which can lead to a loss of reputation that can hamper future business opportunities.

"In our industry, you have to keep the vehicles moving; time is money. The longer the vehicles sit idle, the quicker the costs can get astronomical," says Mark Allcock, general manager of Meller Flow Trans Ltd, a provider of product handling solutions for the transport industry. Meller Flow Trans' largest facility is in the UK, with satellite locations in the Netherlands and Germany. "Everything we do is transport-related: liquids, gases, dry bulk. If it's moved by road, we're involved with it. Therefore, we know the importance of uptime and keeping vehicles moving."

Getting to know you

One company that has taken Meller's commitment to maximising employment of its transport fleet to the next level is H&S Group, an 80-year-old company based in Barneveld, The Netherlands. H&S has developed from a strictly tank-transport operation into one of Europe's leading multimodal full-service transport providers for the bulk liquids industry. H&S Group now features two major freight transport divisions:

- H&S Foodtrans, a foodstuffs-only fleet that uses 1,200 tank containers for intermodal transport throughout Europe and Russia, and
- H&S Transport, which has more than 250 transport trucks in operation in The Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Italy, Belgium and the UK for the carriage of bulk liquids.

"They're a big company and a rapidly growing group," said Allcock. "H&S is the kind of group that is not shy about expansion,



Operators look to equipment suppliers to help them improve efficiency

with a consistently growing fleet of transport vehicles."

Wolter Boelema's relationship with the H&S Group began when he was used as a sub-contractor through his transport company, BTS European Ltd. Because of recent changes in EU regulations that no longer allow trucks registered in The Netherlands to operate in the UK, H&S Group has formed H&S Trucking (UK) with Boelema, who has ceased the operations of BTS European, as its managing director and part owner. Now, H&S has its products shipped to Great Britain with its H&S Trucking (UK) subsidiary responsible for delivering to end-users throughout the country.

"In Europe, they're trying to make a level playing field so drivers have the same earning power, that's why you can't run trucks registered in Holland in the UK any more," explains Boelema. "So H&S set up H&S Trucking and is running 50 trucks in the UK. We bring in hundreds of loads a week, collect the containers from the docks and do the deliveries. These are huge companies we are delivering to, like Cargill."

Rapid response

With the volume of liquid cargoes coming into the UK in any given week, Boelema's fleet requires pumping equipment that is not only reliable, but also able to supply the flow rates

and line-clearing capabilities that optimise a transport unit's time at the loading terminal. For the solution he and, by extension, the H&S Group turned to Meller Flow Trans (MFT) Ltd.

Since 1960, MFT has been a one-stop shop for transport and discharge solutions for on-the-road product handling applications. The company prides itself on not only supplying the necessary equipment, but also installing it and then servicing it once it has been in operation.

"Basically, you bring your truck to us, tell us what you want to do with it and we take care of the rest. We supply you with the correct discharge equipment, install that equipment and then take ownership of any service & maintenance requirements," says Allcock. "Many companies will only provide the equipment, but then it's just a pump in a box. We provide a one-stop shop for the whole package."

In late 2009, Boelema decided that his transport fleet needed an equipment upgrade. In performing some research, he came upon MFT, which he noticed supplied the discharge equipment for the operations he and H&S Group were conducting. In many cases, that equipment was positive displacement sliding vane pumps from Blackmer®, based in Grand Rapids, MI, US.

"We've been distributing Blackmer equipment for more than 40 years and we

like to think that it's been a very successful relationship in that time," said Allcock. "The relationship between the manufacturer and distributor is very much a two-way thing, and they treat us as a business partner, not just as distributor and customer. Also, Blackmer quality is second to none, with a good market footprint and a great reputation for what they do. We're also the first port of call for a lot of their new lines of equipment. Blackmer is aware of our position in the U.K. and quite keen to send us equipment to test first."

With that as a background—and after assessing the needs of Boelema's fleet—Meller had no trouble recommending Blackmer's STX Series sliding vane pumps as the answer to his equipment needs. "The STX3 is quite simply the market leader, a premiere-quality cargo pump for liquid discharge," says Allcock. "They were definitely taking a step up in quality and efficiency with the STX3 when compared to their old pumps."

The right answers

Blackmer's 3-inch STX3 sliding vane pumps meet the needs of Boelema and the H&S Group because they have been designed for efficiency in liquids handling applications. They are constructed of 316-grade stainless steel and



Blackmer's sliding vane pump

non-metallic vanes, which allow them to run dry for short periods of time while also giving them excellent line-clearing and self-priming capabilities. STX pumps also feature external ball bearings, chemical mechanical seals and PTFE elastomers.

"It's a simple piece of equipment that gets

mounted on the chassis and you don't think about it anymore," Boelema says. "The STX3 can discharge 30,000 litres (7,925 gallons) in 38 to 40 minutes, which is tremendous, and when you need to do that five times a day, you need all the time you can get. One other thing with the STX pump: it clears the lines afterwards. Most pumps, when you discharge and when the tank is empty, don't clear the line so we had to use extra air lines to remove the product from the lines. The STX will clear 40 to 60 feet of lines."

Allcock hopes that the reception the new pumps have received at H&S will be the foundation for a fruitful business relationship in the future. "The STX is widely regarded as a premier-quality cargo pump for transport-related discharge," said Allcock. "Its pure efficiency, discharge times and line-clearing, coupled with long service life, make it the common sense choice of stainless steel cargo pumps with added value-for-money benefits."

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