



Schoenbeck plant and machine techniques

Schoenbeck specialises in machine, plant engineering and construction. Here, Dave McGuiness, international business and product manager, speaks exclusively to Pipeline about the company's expertise.

Pipeline: Tell us about your core business

Dave McGuiness: Our core business is the manufacturing of specialised equipment for customers producing sewage pipes (Vitrified clay pipe). Some of our customers manufacture up to 120,000 tonnes of saleable stone pipes per annum from OD of 150mm (6") to 2000mm (88"), with lengths of 1500mm up to 2000mm. Our job starts with the customer's planned pipe product scope, aimed tonnage/ per annum and planned quantities of manpower. Based on this and other data, we calculate the required tact speed/ equipment required to achieve the required output. Depending on our customer requirements, final supplied equipment could be anything from manually operated machinery to fully programmed, camera guided, robotic equipment.

Our second business area is the manufacturing of new state of the art vacuum pipe lifting equipment, all of which carry the brand name Elite. This extremely successful product range is at home within the water, gas and oil industry. The lifters have a SWL (safe working load) of 5000 to 16000kg. Diesel-driven or electrically powered, the power selection is dependent on the required application.

Our one cylinder (air cooled) and two cylinder (water cooled) power packs operate globally.

Pipeline: Where are the growth areas?

DM: Schoenbeck has seen explosive growth in the demand for machinery to support the stone clay pipe industry. For example, in October 2009, we won four significant contracts in respect of a new factory in the Middle East. The sandy terrain of such regions means that only stone clay pipes can be used as sewage transportation. Forecasts for this market indicate that the requirement of stone clay pipes will expand in the near future. That's all good news for Schoenbeck.

The pipeline sector seems to be settling down again with various projects going back online. Schoenbeck is experiencing a large flow of orders and requests for the standard vacuum lifting equipment. Additionally, we are seeing an equally large flow of interesting projects which all demand new concepts for some extraordinary equipment.

Pipeline: Are you suffering as a result of the downturn?

DM: Whilst Schoenbeck experienced a short term decline in turnover during 2009, it did not result in the reduction of factory working hours or the release of employees. Our employees are our biggest asset - experienced and qualified personnel are not easy to find. Customer service and equipment quality must be guaranteed within a company, as they are fundamental requirements for long term success.

Internal manufacturing methods are aimed to optimise manpower and hours. We have already upgraded our production by 40 per cent, and engineering by 30 per cent in 2009/10, in response to the upturn.

In 2008 we introduced the vacuum pipe lifting equipment. The aim was to enhance our market potential and build a secondary supporting business leg. The pipeline sector was nothing new for us and we had

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fundamental experience. In some ways, it is like automobile industry in Europe - car manufacturers now share car showrooms, to reduce marketing costs. The dealers have more alternative products to offer, so higher potential to sell. This business model has worked well for us.

Pipeline: Who are your competitors? Who does it well?

DM: Schoenbeck has competitors, but we prefer to concentrate on ourselves. I believe we are our own best competitor! Schoenbeck constantly looks to improve where and when we can. In this business you never stop learning, and if you do, you stop to wanting to improve - that is not our route.

Some of our competitors prefer to purchase Schoenbeck equipment and market it under their own brand, which suggests to me that our equipment is well respected. Our research shows our customers are very satisfied with our products, efficiency and customer service, but we will always try and improve.

Pipeline: Do you offer anything different/new?

DM: A highlight in the water, oil and gas industries this year will be the new Elite Lite vacuum pipe lifter. It is self-contained and extremely lightweight, with the main power pack situated separately at the backhoe/excavator rear as a counter weight. The main beam, situated at the stick end weighs just 350kg. This particular unit can also be supplied

with either a single cylinder or two cylinder diesel engine. Both have a very low sound level of 76db - excellent for domestic urban use.

Additionally, we are excited about a new opportunity linked with flight applications. In some regions, the option of driving a pipe from A to B is not feasible, so why not transport it by helicopter?

Pipeline: Why should people choose your company?

DM: Finding the right company as a manufacturer for equipment can be difficult. I believe our customers require a company with a track record in delivering an excellent product, competitive pricing and good product availability. At Schoenbeck we have all this. The company name Schoenbeck always stood for quality and top customer service. Moreover, we now have an established international business.

There is still much to do, and we are doing it. As a result, I believe Schoenbeck has a very successful future.

