

Sue Tyler visited Fast & Fluid in Sassenheim, The Netherlands, to find out how the company has become such a major influence in the global tinting sector

Thirty years of tinting solutions



Marc Uleman, Group President, IDEX



Accuracy, reproducibility and reliability are the words at the core of Fast & Fluid's philosophy. Having celebrated its 30th anniversary last year, the company is looking to the next 30 with the same passion. Acquired in 1996 by IDEX, which has a history of quality design, engineering excellence and a secure financial situation, Fast & Fluid believes in the power of its people, who devote their efforts and enthusiasm to being the right partner for its customers.

THE KEY TO GLOBAL SUCCESS

The company designs, builds and supports all its tinting equipment: paint dispensers, mixers and shakers. For the design alone, Fast & Fluid has a global team of around 40 engineers. Marc Uleman,

Assembly hall Sassenheim



Group President, IDEX, spoke about the high level of R&D to keep an advantage in the marketplace and drive innovation. After the design phase, the machines are manufactured in-house, from the metal housings to the quality seals, pumps, software and accessories.

Fast & Fluid is able to meet global demands with a wide range of tinting solutions, demands which may be different in different parts of the world due to local situations.

Fast & Fluid Management in Sassenheim mainly services the EMEA area, sister company Fluid Management Inc takes care of the Americas. Customers in the AP region are taken care of from the Australian office in Unanderra, as well as by local offices in India, Singapore and China.

Apart from production in Sassenheim and Wheeling, Fast & Fluid also opened a production facility in China in 2007, with another facility being built in the next two years. In the important Indian market a plant was built in 2011, which recently doubled in size to cope with the growth in the Indian market. The company now has six sales and manufacturing sites with some 60 service partners and agents to keep customers, on all continents, working to optimum capacity.

As mentioned before, R&D is incredibly important to Fast & Fluid and with this high level of research, the machines produced have the advantage of being equipped with the latest technology. Utilising both internal and external highly experienced suppliers, the company can boast solutions on a global scale.

Marc believes in daily meetings, even if they are for 10-15 minutes, which can keep everyone

COMPANY PROFILE

on top of any issue that might be playing. Working as a team, even globally, provides the whole company with skills that can be used to benefit everyone. Cutting corners is not an option.

■ CONTINUOUS INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE AND INNOVATION

Having celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2015, Fast & Fluid held an open day for staff and families. Committed employees are the backbone of the company and, therefore, Fast & Fluid chose to make them a central element in the communication. A motivated staff can make the difference and it has proved more than worthwhile for the company to invest in a working environment that values ambition and stimulates sharing knowledge and insights.

The company has invested quite heavily in recent years, even during the recession, with the purchase of new manufacturing equipment, in the region of several million Euros. As Marc Uleman said: "This took a lot of courage and confidence but it felt like the right thing to do. State-of-the-art equipment ensures efficiency. The new machines, with overnight working operations, can bring flexibility to cope with peaks.

The company launches a new product each year. For instance the X-Smart (2013), which was designed and built with emerging regions in mind and which comes in an 'IKEA-like pack' for easy transportation and assembly. It is low in maintenance, offers savings on servicing, is light and stackable, and can be assembled in only seven minutes. The X-SMART has proven very popular with customers and even won the company an Honorary Mention 2014 in the Red Dot Design Awards. Other new products were a manual mixer, the GA350, in 2014 and a new shaker in 2015 (SK550 1.1). An automatic mixer is scheduled for launch in 2016, followed by a new Harbil dispenser in 2017.

Fast & Fluid thoroughly 'road tests' its machines in the market during development to ensure they are always up to standards and meet customer requirements, thus ensuring further growth in the years to come.

■ A PROUD HISTORY THAT LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

Jan Post, Vice President Research International, Fast & Fluid Management, continued the overview of the company, explaining its history and the developments in the market.



Driven by passion

Tinting entered the USA in the mid-1950s and came over to Europe a decade later. Colourant developments have been on-going, driven by regulations and growing environmental awareness by the end users. Fast & Fluid works closely with major paint companies to understand the impact of the changes on tinting equipment and to ensure optimal performance of its products now and in the future.

Scandinavia is driving the environmental regulations, while emerging regions are now also implementing changes to ensure paint companies in these countries develop colourants that are more compliant. Fast and Fluid helps by providing solutions that offer these companies the chance to move forward and meet global guidelines.

A tour of the plant followed and the first thing you notice is the cleanliness of the shop floor. The streamlining of the production area allows the assembly and testing to be seen immediately, with the products being assembled, the electric machines being installed and the final testing of the machines, prior to despatch. Fast & Fluid and its workforce are proud to be a part of this dynamic enterprise and it shows immediately upon entering the facility, which explains the success of the company in the past and the high expectations for the future.

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In 1948 Harbil, Fast & Fluid's flagship machine was born. The name Harbil refers to Harry Rosset & Bill Weismann who, in the 1940s, started with the manufacturing of Harbils. Many years later the European operation started: in 1985 Harbil International was founded in Sassenheim.

Contact: Fast & Fluid Management BV,
PO Box 220, 2170 AE Sassenheim

The Netherlands

Tel: +31 (0)252 240 800

Email:

info.fast-fluid.netherlands@idexcorp.com

Website: www.flast-fluid.com