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Tankcontainer MAGAZINE

Owner F. Onur Yilmaz describes to Tankcontainer Magazine the development of Zafer Logistics within the Turkish market

TURKISH DELIGHT


Volume 8 | Issue 3 | September 2021

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5-19



M&S Logistics, has discussed cloud hosting and migrating to the MRI SaaS platform.

The COVID-19 pandemic required M&S to make various changes to business operations, not least to support staff to work from home around the world, demand remained strong and international growth continued.

Front Cover Interview

Owner F. Onur Yilmaz describes to Tankcontainer Magazine the development of Zafer Logistics within the Turkish market



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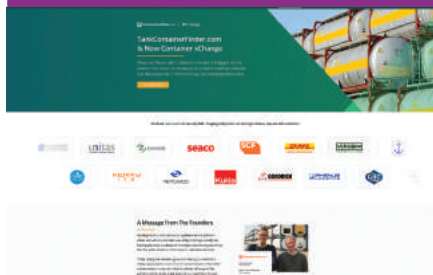
EQUIPMENT



Clad to meet you
Lamilux Composites believes its new tank cladding product is destined for greatness.

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MARKET



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Stress and strains to continue well into 2022

In the immortal words of Stephan Remmler's 1987 hit single, *"Alles hat ein Ende: Nur die Wurst hat zwei"* ("Everything has an end: only the sausage has two"). But it now seems inevitable that there will be no end in the immediate future to the highly unusual pressures and influences that have been driving the tank container market up in 2021.

The background is well-known - the rapid post-Covid demand surge, led by China, created disruptions and imbalances in many global supply chains. Capacity management by shipping companies led to tightened containership availability while cut-and-run policies by ocean carriers left empties on the dock and out of position. Port congestion - and intense competition for the available slots on vessels - has combined with extreme weather events and the Suez Canal closure to disrupt flows and dramatically increase freight rates. The cost of shipping a 40' dry freight container from China to the US, for example, has leapt from \$2,500 prior to March last year to a record high of more than \$20,000 in August 2021.

Covid-19 outbreaks at Yantian and Ningbo-Zhoushan ports - among the world's busiest - led to congestion with dwell times for loading tank containers at Yantian increasing to 27 days in mid-June from the normal 7 days. The port temporarily stopped accepting tank containers for export.

With post-Covid economic recovery spreading more globally, tank container demand is growing strongly, making it a challenge for players to deliver their commitments in the face of ongoing congestion, not just at ports but also terminals and depots. Equipment shortages are acute in some regions, a situation likely to continue for the rest 2021, with a probability of the constraints lingering longer into 2022 rather than being transitory.

To meet demand tank container manufacturers are working close to capacity but tight availability will inevitably be a feature of 2021. Industry reports forecast dry freight container production increasing by 67% in 2021 to 5.2 million TEU, with production facilities fully booked until the end of the year. This would boost the fleet growth by 6.4%. Prices have doubled to their highest level on record, as have per diems for long term leases.

Tank container fleet growth is forecast to expand at an average annual rate of 5.8% for the five years to 2025 due to modal share gains and strong trade growth. This is consistent with

our own analysis, published in June's issue of *Tankcontainer Magazine*, which forecasted a minimum 'bankable' annual growth expectation of 5% over the next 10 years, with a realistic expectation of 5-10% p.a. *Tankcontainer Magazine's* calling of the bottom of the market in the autumn of 2020 has proved to be correct, making the December 2020 acquisition of Trifleet Leasing by GATX timely.

Sustained supply chain disruptions, equipment and labour shortages - not least among drivers - have created new opportunities for tank containers and challenged long-established business models and purchasing strategies. Why bother, for example, with just-in-time purchasing strategies when physical supply cannot be guaranteed and cash is plentiful, debt is exceptionally cheap and inflation is rising? The opportunity cost of stockpiling chemical raw materials is essentially close to zero when company cash deposit yields are negligible. The cost of production stoppages far outweighs any working capital finesse around low stocks - it is now more compelling to own and hold inventory than cash, and tank containers provide one of the most flexible methods to store inventory.

The tank container industry's main financial challenge is to convert the boost in revenues over the past 12 months into a meaningful step-change in profitability. Among the operators, market leader Stolt Tank Containers, for example, reported a near-15% increase in shipments in Q2 - its largest quarter-on-quarter increase for over 10 years - but the 16% improvement in revenue associated with this, when compared to Q2 2019, produced an essentially unchanged operating profit of \$12.6 million (although the time lag associated with the pass-through to customers of recent high freight costs will strengthen Q3 profitability).

On the M&A front, the European Commission approved the estimated €3 billion (\$3.62 billion) acquisition of Ermewa, owner of second-largest global lessor Eurotainer/Raffles, by CDPQ and DWS Alternatives Global Limited, an asset manager controlled by Deutsche Bank.

With its attractive investment story, there is plenty of due diligence being done on the tank container sector. ■

Leslie McCune, Editor



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M&S Logistics, the global provider of bulk liquid transport and logistics services, has discussed cloud hosting and migrating to the MRI SaaS platform.

The COVID-19 pandemic required M&S to make various changes to business operations, not least to support staff to work from home around the world, demand remained strong and international growth continued.

In 2020, the company started its second US office, in New Jersey, and was named in the London Stock Exchange "1,000 Companies to Inspire Britain". M&S has been using specialist tank container operating and rental software from MRI Intermodal for many years, hosted in the UK on servers run by a third party.

M&S Logistics turned to MRI as its long-term software partner to discuss cloud hosting and explore the benefits of migrating to the MRI SaaS platform. Planned "from the ground up" and continuously enhanced over many years, MRI's SaaS solution is dedicated exclusively to clients using MRI software.

Having worked in the cloud for over a year now, M&S has seen clear improvements in the speed, performance, and security of its operating software. With the new cloud set-up, MRI engineers can resolve issues much more quickly in the background. The new web apps also look good and are easy to work with.

Since having settled in with the new cloud model, M&S is now looking at adding further value to its data with business intelligence tools, advanced analytics and interfaces to other systems. In the future, this could well include interfaces to customer portals and other 3rd party platforms as the tank container industry accelerates the pace of digitalisation, like so many other sectors of supply chain, logistics and shipping.

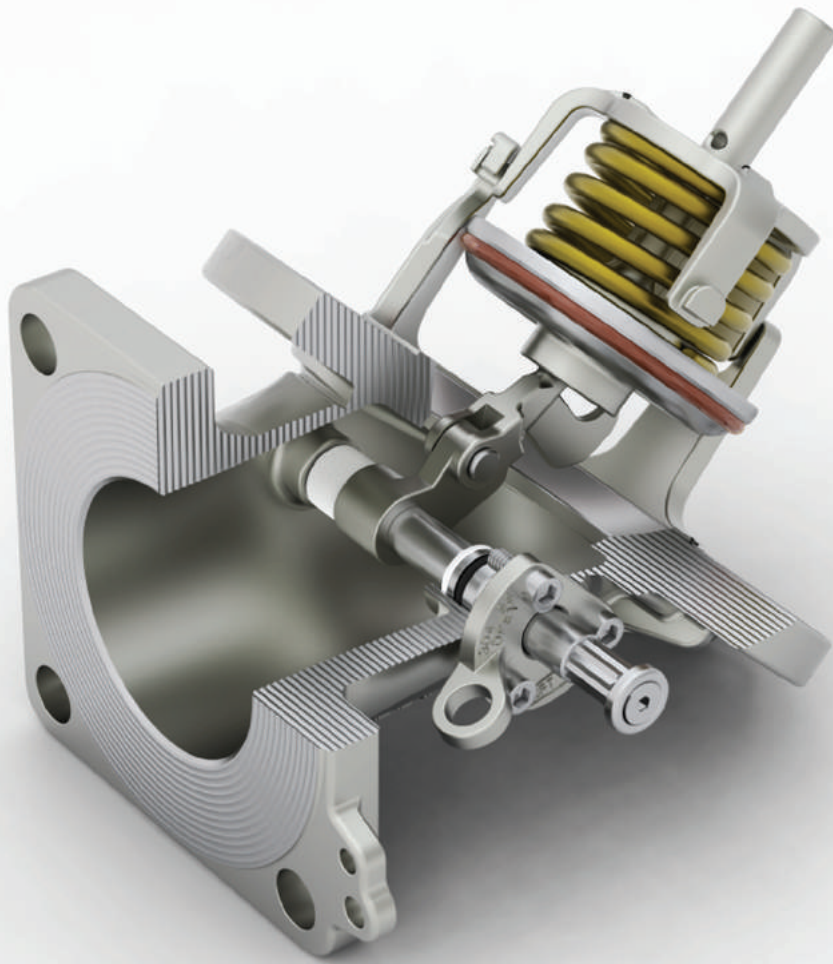
The platform is powered by data centres in the UK, Singapore and USA and all infrastructure is configured for industry best practice and specifically for the software solutions that it host ■



Bulk Tainer Logistics opens new office in Stenungsund, Sweden

Bulk Tainer Logistics has opened a new office in Stenungsund, Sweden and established a new business entity, Bulk Tainer Nordics AB.

"Having this representation in the Nordics supports our growth and goal to provide the best service possible globally," states the UK-based tank container operator and bulk liquids logistics specialist. The new office is headed by regional manager Edoardo Scosta, with the help of commercial manager Linda Schiotz. ■



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After more than 25 years at VTG, which alongside its rail capabilities has a global, broad-based fleet of tank containers, Dr Heiko Fischer is to step down from the CEO role, but will retain close ties to VTG.

Jost Massenberg, chairman of the supervisory board of VTG, said: "My thanks go to Dr Fischer for his tremendous achievements in developing this company, his strategic

CEO of VTG, Heiko Fischer, 'set to step down'

vision and for the professionalism with which he has led us through the many changes of ownership.

"For more than 17 years, Fischer has been tirelessly, rigorously, and successfully planning and implementing the transformation of VTG into a European market leader."

The company's orientation and the nature of its leadership tasks will both change as a result. VTG withdrew its shares from public trading in 2019. The imminent squeeze-out will now transition the company to a completely private enterprise that will focus more sharply on its core markets.

Due to this, in consultation with the supervisory board, Heiko Fischer decided to place the management of the company and its transition to this new phase into new hands. Fischer will turn his attention to new duties in the interests of VTG.

Fischer will step down from his duties as chairman of the executive board effective June 30, 2021 but will retain close ties to VTG in the capacity of senior advisor for activities in particular in the political and governmental affairs.

Fischer said: "I look back on my long tenure at VTG with humility, great joy and enormous gratitude. Having successfully overcome the second major economic crisis on my watch, it is time for a new start."

"I am glad to have fashioned VTG into a European market leader, and to have opened the door wide to digital rail freight. In my new role, I will continue to play my part in developing this mode of freight transport and will stay close to the fantastic people who, over all these years, have made VTG into what it is today." ■

Nijhof-Wassink completes construction of new warehouses

Nijhof-Wassink has completed construction of new warehouses at its Coevorden site in the Netherlands.

Together, total warehouse space at the facility stands at some 17,000 m². "Even before completion, when doors and lighting still had to be installed, the warehouses were filled with big bags from all over the world.



It shows how much we were ready for expansion.

Thanks to the hard work of our team in Coevorden and the contractor, the opening was able to take place ahead of time," says Bertil Bouwhuis, managing director, chemical logistics at Nijhof-Wassink.

Site manager René Guit adds: "After receiving approval from our Board

of Directors we were able to start building.

Different parties involved switched quickly and that is exactly how we work. We're always working on continual improvement and don't take no for an answer.

Thanks to our network and the flexibility of our people, there's always a solution." ■

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Bulk Tainer Logistics has established a new entity in Belgium



Bulk Tainer Logistics has established a new entity in Belgium, **Bulk Tainer Logistics Benelux BV**.

Headquartered in Antwerp, the office is headed by Peter de Boever. "We felt it was time to have our feet firmly on the ground in this key region of our industry sector," the company states. ■

Den Hartogh is equipping TDI tank container fleet with GPS Temperature Telematics

Den Hartogh is equipping its entire specialised TDI tank container fleet with GPS Temperature Telematics, providing live GPS positioning and temperature monitoring.

"We want our customers to recognise and value our service of organising safe and reliable transport of bulk chemicals," says Nils van der Poel, IT project manager. "For over 10 years, Den Hartogh has been working on various telematics projects. In close cooperation with customers, we have further introduced SMART containers to improve safety, cargo quality and give us more transport visibility. We always want to deliver a service that exceeds the market standards, and we see temperature monitoring and



temperature control as an important way to guarantee the high standard we set ourselves in providing an optimal customer experience."

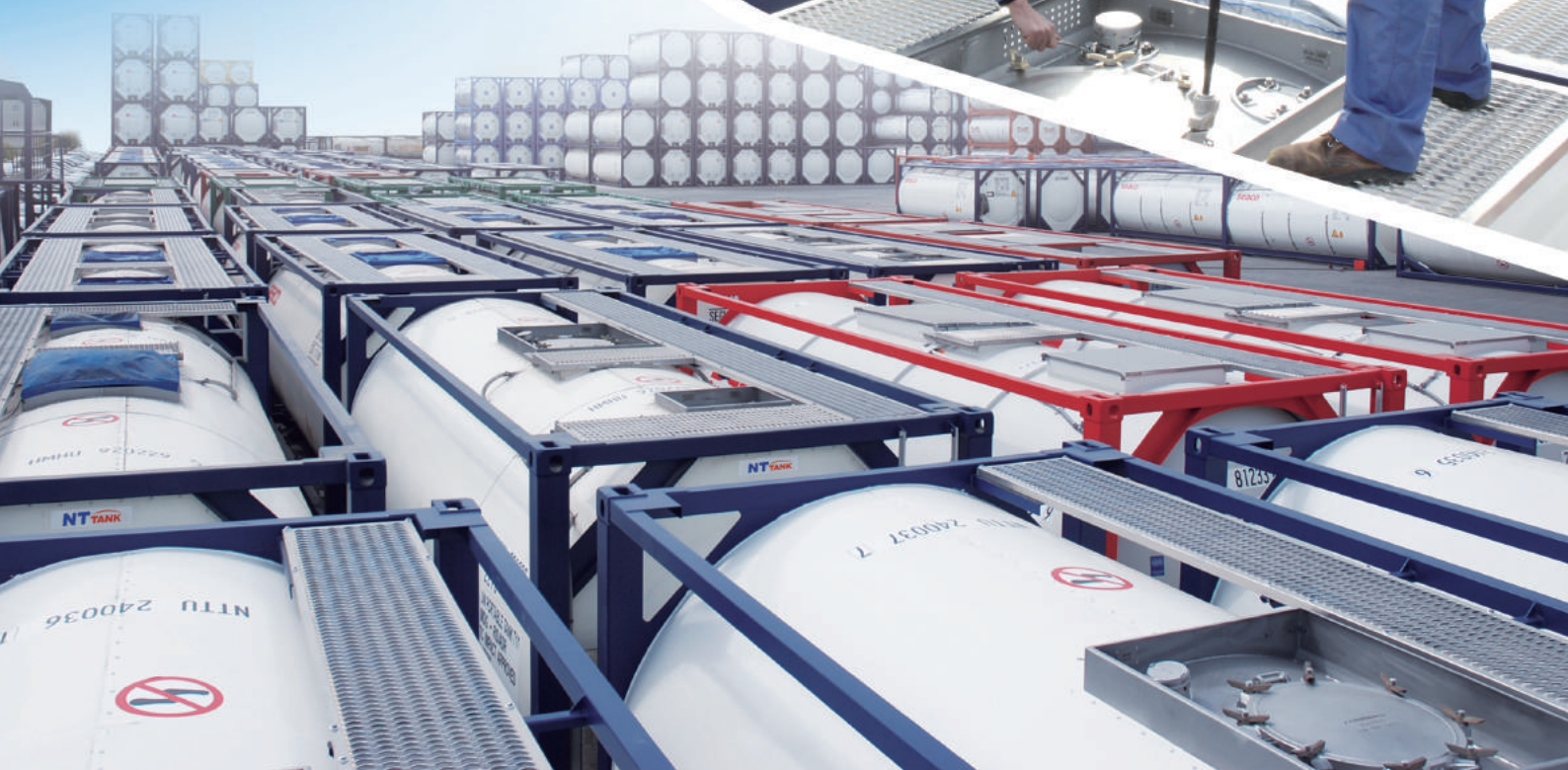
The GPS solution uses the new Thermowell probe, which Den Hartogh says is "the ultimate, most robust and most accurate method to measure product temperature" and employs a sensor installed inside a tube, welded to a flange inside the tank. Readings are transmitted wirelessly to a display that can be placed on the side of the tank, as well as to the solar-powered communication device, CLT20-Ex, supplied by

Intermodal Telematics (IMT).

"With the IMT prime GPS unit CLT20-Ex, we receive the temperature through to the portal every five minutes," explains Peter Boodt, technical supervisor at Den Hartogh. "Via the alerting modules, we can respond immediately to disruptions, assert greater control and minimise risks, waste and product recalls. The accuracy of the Thermowell and the almost real time sending interval of the CLT20-Ex gives us the confidence our customers need when trusting us to carry their temperature sensitive products." ■

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MOL Logistics (MLG) and Nippon Concept (NCC) agree joint venture



MOL Logistics (MLG) and Nippon Concept (NCC) have agreed to establish a new tank container joint venture.

The new company, MOL Logistics (Tank Containers), will deepen MOL Group's business alliance with NCC and expand their partnership in global tank transport. MOL acquired a 15% stake in NCC in 2018 and since then the two have shared overseas offices and business networks.

The joint venture will extend this business alliance and, MOL says, further accelerate collaboration in business and cargo transport operations using tank containers.

"Specifically, MLG will extensively intensify its agency business on NCC's behalf, starting in Thailand and other major Asian countries showing tremendous growth in demand for chemical products, such as China and India," MOL says.

"In addition, by leveraging MOL and MLG's networking capabilities,

MLGTC will maximise the synergetic effects of NCC's know-how and track record in door-to-door international multimodal transport services for liquid cargoes and various types of gas."

MLG will extensively intensify its agency business on NCC's behalf, starting in Thailand and other major Asian countries showing tremendous growth in demand for chemical products, such as China and India

MOL Logistics spokesperson



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Van den Bosch wins Dow Chemicals gold 4STAR award



Van den Bosch is extremely proud to receive the highest rating this year following the Dow Chemicals 4STAR event.

The company was presented with a Gold 4STAR award. During the annual event, Dow shares its 4STAR strategy with its partners, and traditionally concludes with an award ceremony.

Dow takes the opportunity of the event to evaluate the performance of its partners on the following four pillars: Safety, Service, Social Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability. These core values are part of the 4STAR programme, which Dow has established to encourage its partners to improve the supply chain.

For the Safety pillar, the number of

incidents, the reporting of so-called near-misses, unsafe situations and the number of incident-free shipments are considered. The core value Service focuses on 'no shows', the number of date changes requested by the carrier and the rejection of shipments. The Sustainability pillar naturally focuses on sustainability initiatives, while Social Corporate Responsibility looks at, for example, responsible employer-ship.

All the achievements and initiatives of the past year related to the 4STAR pillars are assessed to determine the ranking. Van den Bosch scored the highest and received the Gold Award during the ceremony.

Van den Bosch thanked Dow "for the positive evaluation and credits everyone who contributed to this great result". ■

Quala acquires tank trailer cleaning operation

Quala has acquired the tank trailer cleaning operations at Kraft Tank's locations in Kansas City and Oklahoma City, expanding its network of chemical and foodgrade tank cleaning facilities to cover new customers and provide a wider service to its existing client base. Kraft Tank will continue to offer truck and trailer maintenance services and other services at the two sites.

"Our capabilities have always differentiated us from the competition and adding these facilities aligns with our vision to continue improving our network," says Erik Leto, COO of Quala. "These two new facilities offer chemical and foodgrade tank and ISO container cleaning, heating services and IBC cleaning capabilities. In addition, these locations specifically offer new driver rooms, enhancing the overall experience with clean and convenient amenities." ■



Captain Tore Svensen named as Business Development Consultant at Advanced Polymer Coatings, INC.

AVON, June 20, 2021 – Captain Tore Svensen has joined Advanced Polymer Coatings (APC) as a Business Development Consultant, for the MarineLINE® cargo tank coating system.

According to Captain Onur Yildirim, Global Marine Sales Manager, MarineLINE®, "We are very pleased to have Captain Svensen join our organisation. He has a strong background in the Maritime industry with many years of experience onboard coated vessels. He will continue our effort in educating our world-wide customer base on the benefits and industry leading value of the MarineLINE® coating system."

Prior to joining APC, Captain Svensen worked for several leading shipping companies onboard a variety of different coated chemical tankers, including most recently at UACC as Head of Fleet, Middle East, from 2016 to 2021. Captain Svensen began in the maritime industry at the age of 16, rising amongst the ranks to his first command at age 28. He has a diverse portfolio of experience onboard chemical tankers, holding a variety of management positions for profitable companies Odfjell Tankers, JO Tankers, NCC, Barwill and ISS. ■

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SMC Global invests in an ISO tank fleet to ensure continuity



SMC Global says it is investing in an ISO tank fleet in an effort to ensure continuity of supply from overseas partners.

The first 80 ISO tanks already are in service, the company said, and will be used to supply, transport, and distribute its specialty solvent products to paint and coatings customers.

"As market leaders in several of the sectors in which we operate, SMC Global must continue to come up with

solutions to ensure timely supply of critical raw materials to our customers," said Kevin Huber, founder, executive vice president and chief operating officer.

He added: "The building of this ISO tank fleet is a direct result of equipment shortages around the world. It is our priority and responsibility to take immediate steps to strengthen our supply chain."

The newly acquired tanks are designed and constructed "to the highest quality" and pass all ISO inspections and certifications. The tank fleet consists of 20-foot tank containers with vertical baffles, including 50 fitted with ground-operated vapour recovery systems.

The ISO tank fleet will be managed internally by SMC Global's logistics team, which coordinates the company's transportation operations.

"We will spare no expense to make sure we keep our commitment to our customers," said Adam Feldman, founder and CEO of SMC Global. "ISO tank deliveries have traditionally been a less costly and safer mode of transport, but in today's market we are investing to secure supply." ■

Stolt Tank Containers (STC) well up on last year



Stolt Tank Containers (STC) Stolt Tank Containers (STC) posted operating revenue of \$296.6m for the six months to end May 2021, well up on last year's figure of \$264.6m, though operating profit was up only slightly, rising from \$19.7m to \$20.5m.

The company explains that revenues rose on the back of higher ocean freight rates together with a 9.1% increase in shipment numbers, though this was almost entirely offset by higher fixed costs and a reduction in demurrage and other ancillary revenues as the challenging freight market has negatively impacted these revenue sources in the short-term.

Stolt Tank Containers leased in another 2,600 tank containers during its second quarter to help meet this increase in demand and, as Niels G Stolt-Nielsen, CEO of parent company Stolt-Nielsen Ltd, reports, the business continues to set new shipment records on a monthly basis driven by strong demand across a number of regions. ■

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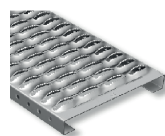
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Chemspec Europe postponed to 31 May - 1 June 2022.



Focus for 2021 will remain on Digital Offerings before the return of the live event in 2022, in Frankfurt

Mack-Brooks Exhibitions today announced the postponement of Chemspec Europe 2021, which was scheduled to take place at Messe Frankfurt in Germany from 29 to 30 September 2021. Instead, the International Exhibition for Fine and Speciality Chemicals will run from 31 May to 1 June 2022. This is to allow sufficient planning security for all parties involved whilst benefitting from a proven virtual marketplace to conduct business.

Focus in 2021: Virtual Stands, Product Showcases & Matchmaking

Hosted online at the original event dates in September, Chemspec Digital 2021 will provide an interactive networking event for the fine and speciality chemicals community. From all over the world, industry experts will have the opportunity to meet, conduct business, discover new substances and learn about the latest trends and developments.

"Last year's Chemspec Digital demonstrated that virtual exhibition stands, product showcases and online meetings do indeed provide new sales opportunities and a successful way to generate business", recalled Liljana Goszdziwski, Portfolio Director of Chemspec Europe. "We will ensure that participants can further capitalise on these opportunities. In the meantime, our brand-new Digital Presentation Series will offer plenty of sales and networking sessions for the fine and speciality chemicals industry. Further information will be released shortly, so watch this space", concluded Liljana Goszdziwski.

The Chemspec Europe Team will communicate closely with customers and partners over the coming weeks and months. We thank all our exhibitors, partners, suppliers and visitors for their support during this challenging time. ■

www.chemspeceurope.com



Deutsche Post DHL Group acquire JF Hillebrand

Deutsche Post DHL Group has agreed to acquire JF Hillebrand, a leading provider of transport and logistics services for the beverage and non-hazardous liquids sectors, for some €1.5bn.

"With the growing maturity of our freight forwarding business, this bolt-on acquisition of Hillebrand is highly complementary to our existing portfolio," says Frank Appel, CEO of Deutsche Post DHL.

"In line with our group strategy, we strengthen our core logistics business and deliver profitable long-term growth. Using our financial strength, we are able to pursue quality investments while reinforcing our unchanged commitment to deliver on investor return expectations."

Subject to various regulatory approvals, following the acquisition Hillebrand will be part of DHL's Global Forwarding, Freight division. DHL says it will benefit from Hillebrand's know-how and customer experience in bulk liquids and other adjacent special care commodities, to leverage the positive underlying growth pattern of these products. ■

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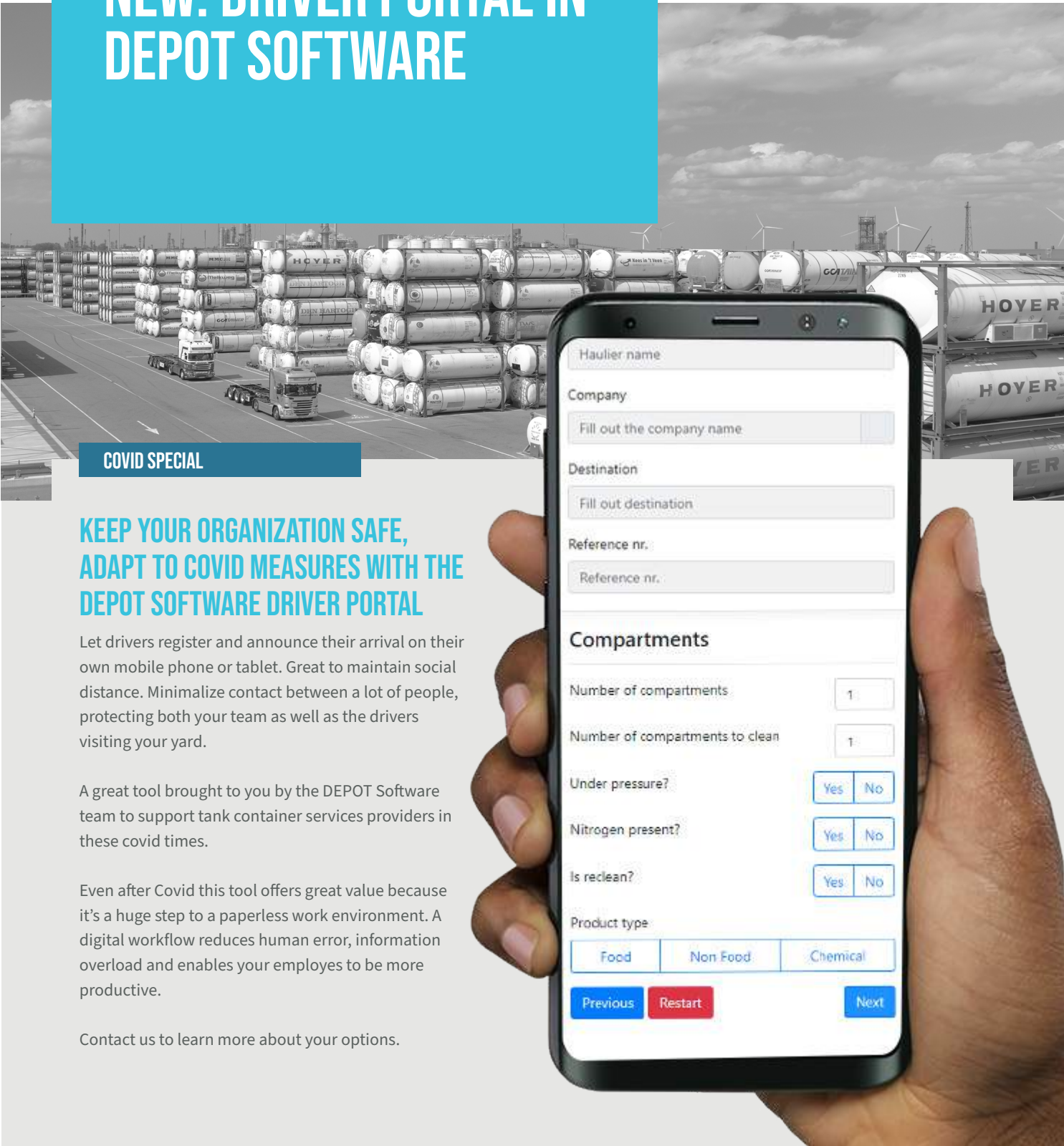
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Reference nr.

Reference nr.

Compartments

Number of compartments

Number of compartments to clean

Under pressure?

Nitrogen present?

Is reclean?

Product type

Food Non Food Chemical

Previous Restart Next

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Very simply, the Mega-Inliner® supply chain system includes a bag and a tank container. The bag which is placed in an empty tank container for filling with any non-hazardous liquids such as food and beverages as well as animal feeds and chemicals.

The high-barrier seven-layer film bag is 100% recyclable and also

impermeable. This means that there is no cross-contamination, no oxidation and no saturation (or desaturation), thus ensuring the integrity and quality of the liquid being transported. Barely any liquid remains when the bag is emptied by means of compressed air, reducing unnecessary waste for improved manufacturing efficiency and value for money.

The Mega-Inliner® bag can only be used in a Mega-Inliner® tank container. However, all existing conventional tank containers that transport non-hazardous liquids can be modified with a few simple adjustments. Leaseback and sales solutions are available. Among the "huge positives" are:

- Fully recyclable
- No chemicals in the cleaning process
- No need for bulk storage (e.g. 200ℓ drums)
- Savings on drums, pallets and polyliners

Peacock closes multi-currency senior debt refinancing

The Peacock Container Group has signed a \$200 million facility agreement, refinancing both its existing senior debt facilities and interim financing put in place for the acquisition of the assets of GEM Containers in May 2021.

The multi-currency (USD and EUR) facility agreement has a combination of senior term loans, underpinning the refinancing of Peacock's current fleet, as well as revolving credit facilities providing flexibility to support Peacock's ambitious growth plans over the coming years. The ISO tank container leasing sector has



shown resilience and stability during the COVID-19 pandemic period and continues to demonstrate strong positive growth prospects.

The successful senior debt raising strengthens Peacock's capital structure through the introduction of two new lending banks to Peacock, materially

reduces total financing costs, and also includes accordion features to increase funding when necessary to capture additional strategic initiatives.

The bookrunners and mandated lead arrangers are ABN AMRO Bank NV and ING Bank NV, Singapore Branch, with TIAA FSB participating as lender. ■

Owner **F. Onur Yılmaz** describes
to *Tankcontainer Magazine* the
development of **Zafer Logistics**
within the Turkish market



TURKISH DELIGHT



TCM: What are the origins and ownership of Zafer Tank?

FOY: The founding partners have been involved in container transportation since 1977. They saw the future of tank container transportation in Turkey and established the company in 2005. Zafer Tank is a two-partner family business supported by a professional management team.

TCM: What range of services does the company provide?

FOY: Most of our activity consists of tank container transport but, due to the nature of the chemicals we transport, we also run heating operations. Some customers want their imported product to be heated to a certain temperature before delivery, making the product more fluid and suitable for discharge. We also provide storage and customs clearance services.

TCM: What range of assets does the company have?

FOY: We have 20 trucks, 44 semi-trailers capable of transporting dangerous goods, a state-of-the-art heating facility and

a very well secured terminal where we can store up to 230 tank containers.

Our goal is not to achieve big volumes but to provide excellent service to a niche group of customers with whom we have long term relationships. For us, less is more. For example, I know our drivers by name, I know how many children they have. They all have my phone number and know that they can call me anytime if they have a problem or request. This close teamwork is an essential part of excellent service.

TCM: How has the company grown?

FOY: Our company started with just 4 trucks and a small core staff. At the time, we were providing transportation services to Stolt's agency in Turkey. In 2008, Stolt started to grow in Turkey with its own office here, and we grew with them. We began providing storage services in 2013.

Meanwhile, as part of a young generation, my appetite for working with international customers increased - tank container transportation and logistics in general were →



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very new concepts in Turkey and we had a lot to learn, which only the international companies could provide us. In time, we started working with tank container operators based in Germany, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands. We currently operate as an information technology-based company that complies with international ISO standards with 80% of our customers being major tank container operators.

TCM: *What is the company's geographical spread?*

FOY: We serve tank container operators which ship tank containers to Turkey but, thanks to our German agency, we mostly serve European tank container operators. We are now closer to other regions with a US representative office that we established this year. Our staff is experienced in the field of international transportation and fluent in foreign languages and our vehicles travel throughout Turkey, the Turkic Republics and the Balkans. We apply the intermodal transportation model, including maritime transportation, as part of our service. We are a very customer-oriented company and operate as if we were a branch of the tank operators we serve, rapidly adapting to their needs.

TCM: *What are the company's ambitions?*

FOY: We do not intend to grow quickly and become a very large logistics company. Our goal is to provide high quality service while complying with environmental and OHS standards. We never want to disappoint our customers. This is the most important issue for us. In this sense, Robert Bosch's famous saying: "I would rather lose money than trust" is a source of inspiration for us. We never solicit business - potential customers find us through references and this is a source of pride for us. Our growth target is 10%-a-year on condition that the quality of our services is not compromised.

TCM: *What chemicals are moved by Zafer Tank?*

FOY: We carry all kinds of chemicals in dangerous and non-dangerous classes and are authorised and equipped to haul all but ADR Class 1 and 7 goods. For example, we carry TDI/MDI, sodium cyanide, polyols and pentanes.

TCM: *What are the unique characteristics of the Turkish tank container market?*

FOY: Large international tank container operators are intensively active in the Turkish market either through their own branches or using contracted local companies. The most important reason for this is growth in the industry and mining sectors which, in May 2021, had year-on-year growth of 42% and 33% respectively. As is well-known, bulk liquid chemicals are used extensively in these sectors.

TCM: *What is the role of tank containers in the company's operations?*

FOY: We work with a niche marketing approach and only engage in tank container operations. We believe in specialisation and only focus on tank containers. We have a good command of the business, manage costs well and provide customised logistics services.

TCM: *How well developed is the tank container infrastructure (depots, cleaning stations, etc.) in Turkey?*

FOY: In Turkey, we saw the first tank container warehousing activity in the early 2000s. Because tank containers are very sturdy structures and manufactured according to strict standards, they are relatively easy to store outdoors.

Tank container infrastructure has made significant progress in the last ten years and there are now EFCO-certified tank container cleaning stations operating to European standards. Some of the cleaning stations are co-owned with foreign partners and some are owned by local companies.

TCM: *What type of customers use the tank container storage facility at Gebze?*

FOY: Some customers store their tank containers on a long-term basis. Others store their tank containers for short periods before the production process is ready. Security measures are in place so we can serve the customers that are authorised economic operators in Turkey.

TCM: *What range of technical approvals does Zafer Tanks have?*

FOY: First of all, in order to haul dangerous goods, the vehicle must comply with some technical conditions and have the ADR certificate of conformity. According to the legislation, a vehicle without that certificate cannot be used to transport dangerous goods. Drivers must have SRC 5 certification in accordance with ADR. Our vehicles and drivers comply with these requirements. Apart from these, there are approvals from local authorities. We are also ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 certified by the German TÜV SÜD audit company. We have also undergone the SQAS assessment and passed with a score above the Turkish average. Compliance of our activities with international quality, environment and OHS standards, as well as SQAS principles, which is perhaps the most prestigious audit practice in the chemical industry, is very important in terms of the excellent service I always mention.

TCM: *What are the key trends in chemical logistics in Turkey?*

FOY: Digitalisation is among the latest trends in the logistics industry. Factors such as faster operational processes, lower costs and increased efficiency are among the benefits of digitalisation in our industry. On the other hand, the use of technology has expanded, as Covid-19 has increased the need for work to be performed remotely.

The rising hygiene standards associated with the pandemic have positively affected the chemical logistics industry. Increasing production of hygiene products has increased the importation of liquid chemical raw materials and, as a result, the volume of chemicals being transported. For example, according to the latest research, more than 80% of industry players said that "Very high" or "High" business opportunities were spilling out of the food and chemical industry as a result of coronavirus.

TCM: *What will be the lasting impact of Covid-19?*

FOY: Businesswise, we have not had any negative impact. Our way of working has changed dramatically as we switched to remote working. Thanks to our IT infrastructure our operations were never interrupted, even though almost all of our personnel worked from home during the peak of the virus.

TCM: *What would your customers say about Zafer Tank, if called and asked?*

FOY: They would tell that we are a very agile, customer-focused company and quick to adapt to the needs of our clients. ■

Biography:

F. Onur Yilmaz started at the company in 2007 as an operation staff member while studying international logistics and transportation at university. Having served at various departments of the company, he has a thorough knowledge of the logistics business and the market. He has completed various training programmes on logistics including IMDG.

Yilmaz is a dangerous goods safety advisor, an SRC 5 trainer authorised by the Ministry of Transportation, and a hands-on manager who is actively involved both on the field and in corporate board rooms. He is currently the operations coordinator of Zafer Tank and is studying for a graduate degree in logistics.

From **high impact resistance** to **looking smart** in the **toughest conditions** – **Lamilux Composites** believes its new **tank cladding** product is **destined for greatness**.

Felicity Landon reports.



CLAD TO MEET YOU

Sometimes, a bit of lateral thinking can make all the difference. Certainly that was the case at Lamilux Composites, where skis and snowboards provided the baseline for the development of a unique new composite for tank container cladding.

The final result, Lamilux X-treme, was launched last year, and tank containers with outer shells made from the new material are now in operation.

Lamilux, based in Rehau, Bavaria, describes itself as Europe's leading developer and manufacturer of fibre-reinforced plastics, producing high-tech composite panels and sheeting on five production lines. Its high-performance and individually adaptable high-tech materials are used in industrial areas including the transport, logistics, automotive and construction sectors. The company describes its Lamilux X-treme tank panels as 'the spearhead of tank cladding materials', providing reduced maintenance and repair costs, maximised service life and less downtime, high-quality optics even under the toughest conditions, and reduced operating costs through weight reduction.

Sascha Oswald, product manager, says: "We began development of this material for tank containers years ago and, from the start, have been in dialogue with the big tank container manufacturers, operators and leasing companies. Last year the final version of Lamilux X-treme was launched – it has been through extensive testing and we think it is the best material for the market."

The challenges

There were three challenges in developing a product for tank container cladding, he says: mechanical strength, weight and price. "Our aim was to give the market the strongest tank cladding ever built, and the lightest at the same time. The tank container market has some very special requirements with tank cladding and we saw a lot of potential to give the customers real benefits."

His enthusiasm is obvious. "My job for the past 11 years has been new business development, to look at new markets where our composite materials could play a major role or make a big difference," he says. "We identified the tank container market eight years ago and almost at the same time we said that the cornerstone for this material technology was in another sector - we had developed a ground-breaking material for skis and snowboards and the requirements were similar in that the material had to be very robust, very stiff and strong and elastic at the same time, but also very light." ➔



We began development of this material for tank containers years ago and, from the start, have been in dialogue with the big tank container manufacturers, operators and leasing companies.

Sascha Oswald, product manager, Lamilux Composites



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- Produced quarterly 'Middle East Tank Container Market Review'
- Founding Editor, *Tankcontainer Magazine*

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Lamilux Tank Cladding

Lamilux X-treme is a fibre-reinforced composite material with up to 70% reinforcement fibres by weight in a highly elastic epoxy resin matrix. At 1.1mm, it is a material that fits the whole market well, says Oswald. "There are other composite materials, 2mm, out there – they are OK, but not even close to this new material or to satisfy all the customer's needs and improve the market."

What makes the cladding special?

The two main components make the difference, he says. "For the composite we use a high-end epoxy resin used for snowboards, for example. This is very elastic and very strong - it is very stiff like a metal but also elastic like a rubber, so it is able to withstand strong impacts with absolutely no problem. The other component is the glass fibres, which we have maximised to 70%. The mixture of these two components is really state-of-the-art. As a result, we have five times higher strength than the current materials, five times the impact resistance, and 30% less weight."

A version of the material was completed three years ago and shown to leasing companies at exhibitions, he explains. "They did their tests but it was a little bit too expensive. So we went back to the drawing board and made adjustments, made it even lighter and then the price was competitive. We then started major marketing this year, and talking to operators, leasing companies and manufacturers."

Although manufacturers tend to be more cautious about making the change, the operators using the tank containers are very open to this, he says. "Some big names have already tried the material and there are tank containers out there with Lamilux X-treme. The operators understand that it will help them bring their repair costs down and reduce downtime – they saw the benefits and said let's try it."

Using the new cladding can save 50kg of weight per tank container, he points out: "Long-term on ship, rail or road, that means you will need a little bit less fuel to transport the container, which means less carbon dioxide emissions per tank container."

The extended life of the material is also key. "It should last much longer than standard materials. For example, regarding UV resistance – we have a gel coating on it which protects the product from yellowing. This coating has been in the market for years, for example on the composites we supply for caravans, and should last for decades against weathering. The material itself, regarding impact, will be capable of living much longer than standard material. That is the aim of the development, to reduce the need for repairs – it should be a trouble-free material for much longer."

Lamilux X-treme was designed in recognition of tank containers being subjected to high mechanical loads during loading and transport. As well as providing high impact resistance, the stiffening effect of the composite is said to lend extreme stability to the entire container construction.

Some big names have already tried the material and there are tank containers out there with Lamilux X-treme.

Sascha Oswald, product manager, Lamilux Composites

Refrigerated tanks benefit

Meanwhile, for refrigerated tank containers low temperatures must be maintained using as little energy as possible over very long periods of time. The new composite ensures safe, energy-efficient transport of food in refrigerated tank containers, says the company, with its thermal insulating properties and low thermal expansion rate due to the high fibre content.

Looking good is also a vital part of the mix – as well as being resistant to sunlight and the effects of weather, the product is easy to clean and avoids the problem of corrosion.

Lamilux is a user of tank containers itself, taking delivery of some of its chemical supplies this way. "We have seen how ugly they can look, with repair patches and so on, and we are interested in the aesthetics. The point of the tank container cladding is to make the container representative, with the logo of the operator or end customer on it – so it is important to make it look good. We are able to produce every colour the customer wants – and that is important for the specific customer."

The composite is delivered as rolls or as cut sheets 8 x 1.5 metres, loaded on pallets. The material is easy to handle and process, says Oswald – 'much easier than aluminium or stainless steel, with no sharp edges'.

Leading composites manufacturer

As for production capacity, he says: "We are the leader in manufacturing these composites, which are used for caravan side walls, truck side walls, building facades, and so on. We have several independent lines and we are just producing in Germany, we have 1,300 employees and capacity of over 20 million square metres per year. If we need a new line, we will invest in it."

Every second caravan or motorhome is estimated to be made with Lamilux's material; another significant sector is ambulances, hospitals, clinics and other health applications for which the company has developed an antibacterial surface.

Lamilux's development programme follows two strands, says Oswald. There are projects specifically to meet the needs of the customer, and there are projects that are responding to global mega-trends, such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions, greener products, light weight, longer lifetime, bio-products, etc. "These are the big projects - we want to adjust all our products in our portfolio to be in line with these trends. Over the decades we have developed a strong network of partners and institutions around the world to work with us on developing these kinds of products."

"Lamilux X-treme is 'my baby' and I am convinced of its qualities. I can see that the market likes the product very much and we have been able to convince customers already. Our aim is to make a difference in the market and to gain interest from the biggest players in the market, so we have a significant market share. We believe that is realistic – the material has its place in the market."

Container xChange acquires TankContainerFinder.com

Every MBA graduate will know that one of the key tenets of business is that its purpose is to identify and satisfy a need profitably. Behind the acquisition by Container xChange (xChange) of Tankcontainerfinder.com (TCF) was the simple lack of tank containers available to xChange clients.



Christian Roeloffs, Founder & CEO at xChange (left)
Dr. Johannes Schlingmeier, founder of Container xChange (right)



“Container xChange has acquired Tankcontainerfinder.com but the founders of Tankcontainerfinder.com remain very close to the existing customer base to provide a smooth transition”

Florian Frese Container xChange

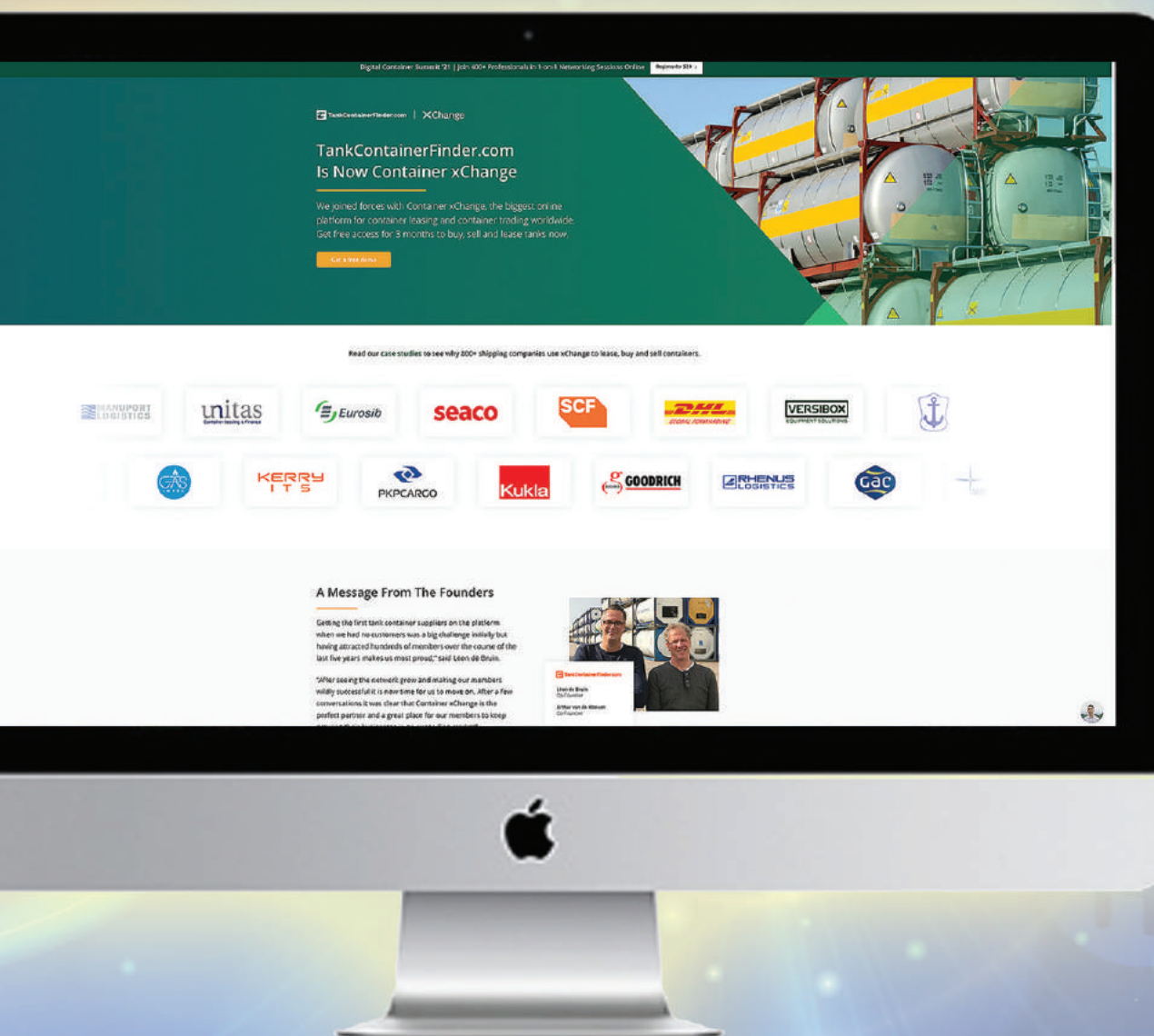
According to Florian Frese, marketing lead of Hamburg-based Container xChange, it was a lack of available tank container capacity that prompted the move. Frese says: “Tank containers are a very logical addition to the xChange platform, essentially the only container type that was missing. More and more customers and leads have been asking to buy and lease tank containers. So joining forces was a very logical step as a marketplace gains its attractiveness from scale, including the number of participants.”

The neutral online platform for container leasing and trading adds tank containers to its service offering through the acquisition, strengthening its position as the market leader. TankContainerFinders.com founders Léon de Bruin and Arthur van de Hoeven will leave the company.

Making the move

The acquisition of TCF by xChange did not come out of the blue for any of the management of either company. The management teams of the two companies had been in contact for the last few years before the move, noted Frese, who reports the actual transaction took roughly three months to complete.

He says: “Container xChange has acquired Tankcontainerfinder.com but the founders of Tankcontainerfinder.com remain very close to the existing customer base to provide a smooth transition.” ➔



The purchase was for a reason, and Frese is confident that clients will appreciate the opportunities the move will bring. So what does the new operation bring to the party?

He says: "Our members will from now on be able to buy, sell and lease tank containers and benefit from the added liquidity of former TCF members bring to our platform. In addition to TCF's features, xChange offers gate monitoring, tracking, integrated protected payments, insurance, issue resolution, and so on."

The acquisition, agreed for an undisclosed amount, adds a substantial cohort of new members to Container xChange's client roster, further cementing the company's position as the leading neutral provider for shipping equipment.

Forefront of digitalisation

"TankContainerFinder.com generated more than \$40 million since it was founded in 2017 and is at the forefront of digitalisation in the growing tank container market," said Dr. Johannes Schlingmeier, founder of Container xChange. "Our customers have been asking for tank containers for a while and after a few conversations it was clear that joining forces with TankContainerFinder.com made a lot of sense."

"We're thrilled to start capturing the huge synergy potential between our platforms. TankContainerFinder.com members can now access the Container xChange platform and collaborate with over 800 vetted shipping companies without transaction fees".

The acquisition of TankContainerFinder.com by Container xChange Digitalisation will bring more transparency to a highly fragmented tank container market, enabling small- and medium-sized companies to remain competitive by simplifying operational transactions when buying, selling or leasing tank containers.

"Getting the first tank container suppliers on the platform when we had no customers was a big challenge initially but having attracted hundreds of members over the course of the last five years makes us most proud," said de Bruin.

"After seeing the network grow, and making our members successful, it is now time for us to move on. After a few conversations it was clear that Container xChange is the perfect partner and a great place for our members to keep growing their businesses in an expanding market".

Dry containers

Now that the corporate move has combined the two platforms, clients can continue to buy, sell and lease tank containers on Container xChange, but also get access to dry containers. How useful is this to the market?

Frese says: "Many tank lessors, operators and forwarders also work with dry containers. In fact there is a customer overlap between xChange and TCF of circa 20%. For a company operating in both segments, being able to source both equipment types through the same channel simplifies operations."

While Frese and his fellow stakeholders in xChange have enjoyed a positive experience of the acquisition what has been the reaction

in the marketplace to this development? Has it been positive? Frese is confident in his response: "Very positive. Existing xChange customers are very happy as adding tank containers was a development they have been waiting for. So far, the same is true for those TCF members now trialling xChange. It will be on our product, customer service and operations teams to now show the value xChange can bring."

"The media echo was immense, everyone seems to welcome transparency, efficiency and trust in a fragmented market." He is pleased that neither name disappeared from the market following this move: "We are combining the dry and tank business under the Container xChange brand name."

Features

Customers are said to be able to benefit from integrated payment handling, container tracking, depot communication, container insurance, and "many more features" to reduce their manual workload. What can these other features offer?

Frese said: "We care about making container operations as streamlined and efficient as possible for our members. Taking care of payments reduces the number of partners you have to pay to only one. As xChange we net payments and our clients receive only one monthly invoice, avoid bank fees and take out the risk completely. On top of that, we help our members along the entire value chain from finding partners, insuring and surveying containers (through third party service providers), to container tracking. We make sure that our members can spend more of their time with their customers."

"It has been an absolute pleasure and very constructive to work together with the founders of TCF but also with those of their customers that we have already been in direct touch with. We are extremely excited about building a very liquid tank container market together with them."

Does this move ensure xChange remains the world's leading platform for container leasing and trading? Frese says: "Yes, we're the only global platform combining the buying, selling, leasing and management of containers. Getting a big part of the former TCF members on board helps us grow the platform further and increases value, liquidity, and number of potential partners for our customers."

Has the move increased the number of the more than 800 companies that use Container xChange to buy, sell, and lease containers globally, and has xChange brought any new clients from TankContainerFinder.com? Frese says: "Yes - TCF members are joining xChange."

Booming market

The tank container market is booming worldwide, expanding by 5.3% in 2020, with a global tank container fleet of 686,650 tank containers on 1 January 2021, according to ITCO's global tank container survey. More companies, especially those in South East Asia, are turning to tank containers and operators are successfully converting certain cargoes to tank containers.

"Container xChange is now in the perfect situation to bring transparency, trust and efficiency to the tank container market," said Schlingmeier. "Our customers have been asking for tank containers for a while now and we're looking forward to bringing transparency, trust and high transaction speed to the tank container market." ■

TankContainerFinder.com generated more than \$40 million since it was founded in 2017 and is at the forefront of digitalisation in the growing tank container market

Dr. Johannes Schlingmeier, Container xChange

AHEAD OF THE HERD

It may still be growing but the Chinese market for tank container logistics is far from easy. Fortunately for **S&W International Chemical Logistics**, the company has the skills and knowhow to meet the challenges ahead

The market for tank container shipping services in China is continuing to enjoy positive growth as more and more companies within the country look to benefit from the intrinsic benefits offered by these systems, reports Shanghai-based S&W International Chemical Logistics. This, perhaps, should come as no great shock given that these units provide an excellent means by which to not only transport but also store a wide range of regulated and non-regulated liquid products.

In addition to saving shippers from the expense of buying packagings they may never see again, S&W's fleet of approximately 1,000 tank containers also enables shippers to move significantly more product per consignment than would be the case were they to use conventional industrial packagings. Consuming the same space on a truck, ship or rail car as a 20' dry shipping container, just one of the company's units can handle either 24,000 or 25,000 litres in one go, depending on the design in question. This compares to 18,000 litres were a box container to be packed with standard composite intermediate bulk containers (IBCs) or 16,000 litres were 200-litre drums loaded instead.

Safe and sound

There's more at play, however, than just enhanced space utilisation and reduced transport costs, with a company representative noting that another key factor driving the market in China is the enviable level of "safety and environmental protection" offered by tank containers over rival formats. And when it comes to health, safety and the environment (HSE), S&W, which provides a full gamut of domestic and international tank container services to large chemical manufacturers and shippers alike, has been fully committed to maximising safety since its founding more than 20 years ago.

"S&W offers professional tank services with local expertise and focuses on the innovative and sustainable development of the traditional logistics business," the representative says. As such, the company prides itself on creating value for customers in all aspects of their logistical requirements, with matters of HSE always taking precedent. "HSE is our root and priority along every step of our business," the representative asserts. ➔





As well as adhering to a strict set of internal processes - including a longstanding commitment to zero occupational injuries and incidents - the company also provides ongoing training to all staff to ensure that they can function and operate to the highest standards and industry best practices. At the same time, this focus on training also means that S&W's professional teams thoroughly understand and comply with all applicable rules and regulations governing both the domestic and international transport of dangerous goods.

On top of this, the ISO9001-2015-certified company is also a fully signed-up participant of the country's Road Safety and Quality Assessment System (RSQAS), which parallels the European Safety & Quality Assessment System (SQAS) and which has been operated by China's Association of International Chemical Manufacturers (AICM) since 2007. Moreover, S&W's commitment to HSE is further supported, the representative explains, via its online logistics platform and its provision of GPS tank container tracking options.

Digital developments

These themselves form part of the company's growing raft of digital services aimed at enhancing the efficiency of both its customers' and its own operations. For while both the chemical manufacturing and chemical logistics sectors were often seen as lagging behind other branches of industry, such as retail, finance and insurance, when it came to digitalisation, the situation is now fast changing. As S&W can attest, today more and more shippers are proving increasingly keen to gain as many real-time insights into their shipments as possible, particularly when it comes to the

movement of sensitive and potentially hazardous cargoes. Moreover, the growing desire among shippers to transfer offline operations online in a bid to gain optimised agility, transparency, record keeping and subsequent analysis means that the provision of digital services will likely become an ever more crucial competency among tank container operators worldwide. "Digitalisation," the representative states, "is very important to S&W and also to our customers."

Consequently, the past few years have seen the company building up its cloud-based online logistics platform, which itself can be accessed anywhere around the globe via a secure application programming interface (API). "We have an online logistics system for online booking, cargo tracking and operational management," the representative reports, adding that S&W is continuing to work on "digital platform integration and optimisation" in order to benefit its customers.

Viral disruption

However, the wider move towards digitalisation is not being driven solely by companies looking to optimise their operations through clearly definable data flows and metrics. Since the first quarter of 2020, the world, as most readers will probably be only too aware, has found itself in the grip of a global pandemic that has forced companies to adopt remote working practices that would have been impossible just a few short years ago. Thus Covid-19 and the measures imposed to combat its spread have combined to push even the most analogue-minded of shippers to embrace digital technologies whether they particularly wish to or not.

S&W offers professional tank services with innovative and sustainable development

S&W International Chemical Logistics

Shanghai china



Unfortunately, that is by no means the only consequence the pandemic has had on companies and their business practices, with the representative reporting that, like many others, S&W has seen its operations impacted through pandemic-induced disruption, especially when such restrictions as social distancing and stay-at-home orders have been implemented. Nevertheless, the company remains unfazed. "We focus on increasing business cooperation, improving operational management and enhancing risk control to cope with the [pandemic's] influence," the representative states.

What's more, Covid-19 has also affected actors all along the international logistics chain in terms of the broader macro-economic turbulence it has created. Slowdowns in trade, contractions in industrial output and general economic flux and instability borne of the virus have meant that companies around the world have had to put many of their plans on ice. In line with this, S&W has decided to hold off from expanding its tank container fleet for the time being, waiting instead to "see if the situation improves next year".

Rates and shortages

The disruptions to established product flows instigated by the pandemic have also resulted in major stoppages and hold ups at ports both in China and abroad. This in turn has put massive strains on shipping lines, leading to significant increases in freight rates. For instance, according to the Freightos Baltic Index, global container freight rates went from a figure of \$1,358 in the first week of March last year to \$10,380 at the start of August 2021, an increase of some 764%.

Moreover, the bounce-back in Chinese production following the end of the initial lockdown there last year saw a major spike in export demand and a corresponding outflow of shipping containers in all their various forms. However, subsequent lockdowns and restrictions in many receiving countries prevented many of those units from returning back to China for subsequent reuse. The upshot of this imbalance has been a serious scarcity of available containers in the country, with tank containers no exception.

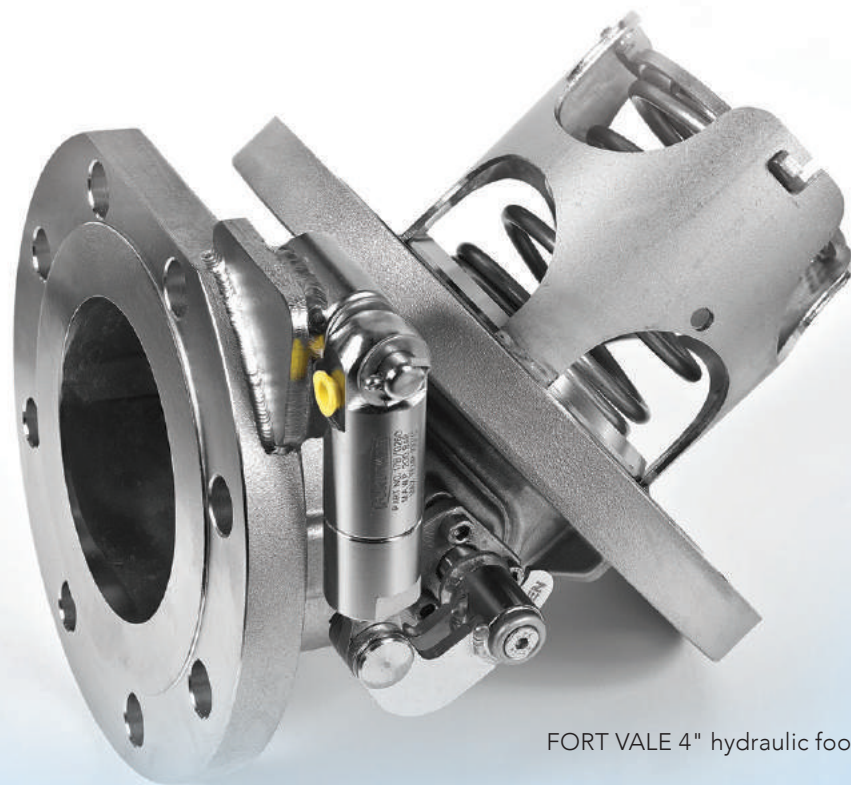
Things may well be improving, though. For while the S&W representative reports that tank container import shipments were down during the first half of the year, export movements are now on the rise again. However, that is not to say that things are all back to normal just yet, with the representative describing this shortage in the availability of units as "the main negative factor affecting the market". Exactly when these constraints might end, of course, is unclear to many. That said, one thing does seem certain: shortage or no shortage, the Chinese tank container sector will continue to develop in terms of sophistication.

"More product types are shipped in tank containers, more middle-to-end customers are using tank containers and more special tank containers are being used as well," the representative says. At the same time, though, the number of players looking to capture a slice of the market is also on the up. "It is a very competitive market," the representative says. Nevertheless, S&W's constant pursuit "to serve customers better, make our services more reliable and provide more efficient services" coupled with its enviable "reputation and safety record" are all factors that will no doubt help it stay ahead of the herd. ■



local expertise and focuses on the of the traditional logistics business

Lifting the veil



FORT VALE 4" hydraulic footvalve with Superseat

Fort Vale's attention to quality and design continues to pay off, with the company enjoying strong demand for its range of high-end tank container equipment



So far, 2021 has been a good year for Fort Vale Engineering, with global sales and marketing director Graham Blanchard reporting that the company has seen "demand skyrocket". The company is currently investing in a new manufacturing facility at its UK headquarters to cope with this upswing in orders which, he says, is being driven by a range of different factors.

One of these factors concerns the increases in material pricing, which is now making the scrapping of some older tank containers "an attractive proposition" for some companies. Other reasons include the natural fleet growth following a number of quieter years for new build production; issues surrounding shipping, both in terms of pricing and the repositioning of equipment; a shortage of drivers to move products in certain regions; and an increase in the number of movements of speciality chemicals requiring more specialised equipment.

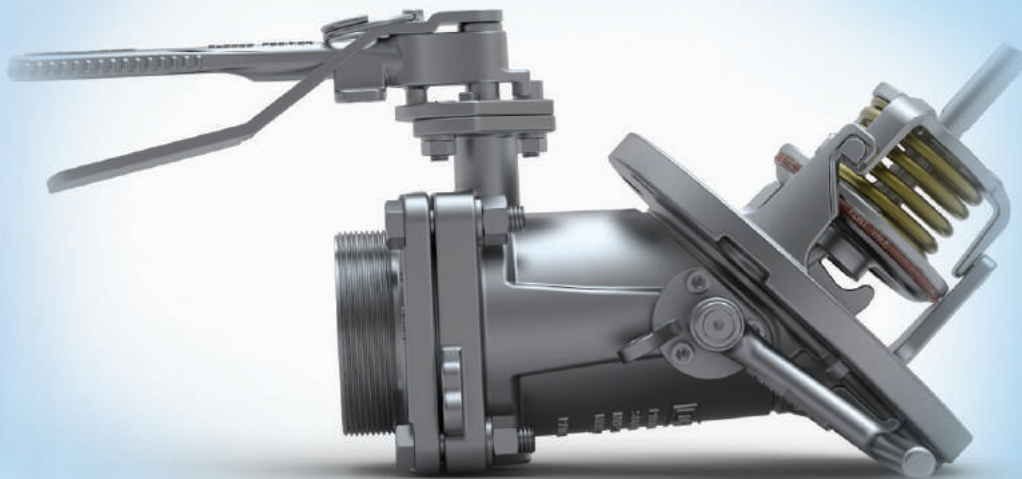
Positives and negatives

"The main positive is that the industry has remained fairly stable throughout the pandemic," he says, adding that it is also proving beneficial for the sector that "tank prices are going up, rather than seeing a race to the bottom, where it affects the whole industry in terms of profitability". Nevertheless, things could always be better, with the market negatively affected by disruptions caused by Covid-19 along the global logistics chain, which has led to greatly increased shipping costs, a reduction in the number of available shipping containers to transport goods and significant delays at ports.

Closer to home, Covid-19 has also had a number of more direct effects on Fort Vale's operations. While the company has continued trading throughout the pandemic, there have nonetheless been a number of localised infection spikes that at one point saw around 30 employees having to isolate at home. "This obviously had an impact on our capacity for a few weeks, but we managed that through putting extra hours on in the factory for those that remained available for work," he says.

Virus-related travel restrictions and temporary business closures also held up some R&D activity that required testing to be undertaken at a specialist facility in the US. Furthermore, the pandemic has also made its mark on the marketing front. For instance, while Fort Vale has been producing its Superseat footvalves "for a period of time now", the cancelling of trade fairs has impinged on its ability to demonstrate the unit's key benefits to potential customers on a face-to-face basis.

"Even though we have advertised this and spoken to lots of customers about the advantages against corrosion of this valve, there are still many customers out there who aren't aware of this development," Blanchard explains, revealing that the Superseat's design can reduce downtime and related maintenance and repair costs caused by corrosion of the valve seat. "The Fort Vale valve may be more expensive than our competitors' but we added this new feature at no extra cost to the customer giving them a far superior valve to what is available elsewhere," he asserts. ➔



FORT VALE 3" Univalve with Superseat



FORT VALE Headquarters in Simonstone, Lancashire

Quality counts

On the subject of price, Blanchard notes that this is something of a perennial challenge. "We are the world leaders in our field because we invest heavily in technology, product R&D and pay the highest wages to attract the best engineers in our area," he says, explaining that the company's Lancashire-based operations have to compete for staff with such prestigious local employers as BAE and Rolls Royce.

Moreover, with the cost of tank containers "hitting an all-time low last year", the pressure on price has intensified, with some competitors offering "unsustainable prices" to win orders. "In some cases, we find that in the attempt to try to make money from these deals, quality can suffer, which results in either having to make parts again or customers coming to Fort Vale to help out by supplying equipment on short lead times. As the saying goes: buy cheap, buy twice," he says.

"Another challenge we have is new entrants to the market who basically copy Fort Vale designs to the best of their ability and supply into the market as if they are like-for-like replacements at a lower cost," he continues, reporting that this can take the form of seals, gaskets or even full valve sets. "My advice to any customer is that they should only ever buy OEM spares for their equipment," Blanchard says.

"Regardless of whether it is Fort Vale or any of the other valve manufacturers, it is the valve designers and manufacturers who have all the key information on sizes, geometry and chemical composition of the various seals and it is they who have carried out all the R&D and testing of the products to ensure maximum performance of the equipment. The equipment that we sell is for a safety-critical environment and saving a few cents here and there is not worth the risk when it comes to safety," he warns.

Raising the bar

As a quality-conscious producer of high-end equipment, Fort Vale, perhaps unsurprisingly, maintains "a constant programme" of R&D. "We are fortunate to have a state-of-the-art test facility on site in the UK, meaning that we can run software simulations on flow rates etc, but then we can immediately do some real-life testing on the various test rigs we have available to us," he says.

As well as carrying out R&D on a range of cryogenic valve equipment, including relief valves, globe valves and gate valves, Fort Vale has also now further enhanced its line of tank container ball valves. In addition to improved sealing performance, the research undertaken has also led to "some innovative developments in reducing the overall height of the valves", something that is clearly beneficial to customers with limited space due to the height restrictions on top of a tank container.



FORT VALE new cryogenic valves range

At the same time, the company has also been busy benchmarking its tank container pressure relief valves against the competition. "Years ago," Blanchard explains, "there used to be two pressure relief valves fitted to a tank container. Through much development work at Fort Vale we improved the flow rates significantly through the valve that meant that only one Fort Vale valve needed to be fitted to a tank container in order for it to be safe in the event of a fire or pressure build-up due to a chemical reaction."

Other manufacturers soon followed suit. However, this recent testing, he reports, has revealed "significant differences" in performance, with flow

rates among alternative designs varying from 20% less flow than a Fort Vale valve to a "massive" 55%. "This," Blanchard says, "begs the question when buying a relief valve other than Fort Vale, is one valve really enough? Yes, the valve may relieve at the correct pressure and it may re-seal on tank tests, but in the event of an emergency will the valve do the job it's supposed to do in terms of protecting the asset and human life?"

Bespoke designs

In addition to standard designs, Fort Vale also works with customers to develop bespoke systems to meet their individual requirements. "Operators and lessors face many challenges with tank containers and sometimes this means that standard equipment is not suitable for particular projects," he says. "Customers will approach us initially asking if we have something within our vast range and if not, we will involve the technical teams to see if we can come up with a solution by working closely together."

"We have excellent relationships with our customers and due to this we are constantly manufacturing equipment that is bespoke, meaning that Fort Vale over the years has developed a huge range of designs that will meet the vast majority of customer requirements," he continues.

On top of this, Fort Vale also supports the after sales market through a network of strategically located sales offices and warehouses around the globe. "These offices hold stock of standard equipment and if we have designed a bespoke solution for a customer in a particular region, we are willing to hold a stock of spare parts in that region should the customer require this service," Blanchard says.

"Where we don't have a Fort Vale office in a particular region, we service this by having long-term relationships with our authorised distributor network, with customers able to find appropriate contact details on our website," he states. And on that cybernetic note, the company is also now gearing up to launch an e-commerce site for the online sale of spares. Initially focussing on the UK market, it will be quickly followed in the coming months by a European web shop serviced by Fort Vale's operations in the Netherlands. ■

SAVE THE DATE: 7-9 DEC 2021



7 - 9 December 2021
Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, UAE



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A POST-PANDEMIC REALITY**

The 15th Annual GPCA Forum will take place from 7-9 December 2021 at Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, UAE, and will address the theme, "Redefine. Reshape. Reinvent. The chemical industry in a post-pandemic reality". This edition will propagate key messages to redefine the challenges, reinvent strategies to capitalize on market opportunities and reshape a renewed future for the chemical industry, one fuelled with a sense of purpose. Bringing together stalwarts and industry experts from across the globe, this edition will stir strategic conversations, build strong synergies to thrive in a new reality, thus, laying the foundation for a collaborative, sustainable, and successful recovery.

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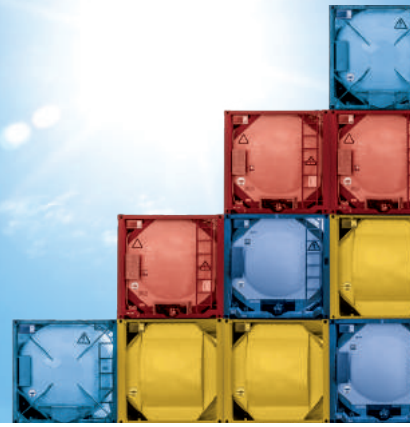
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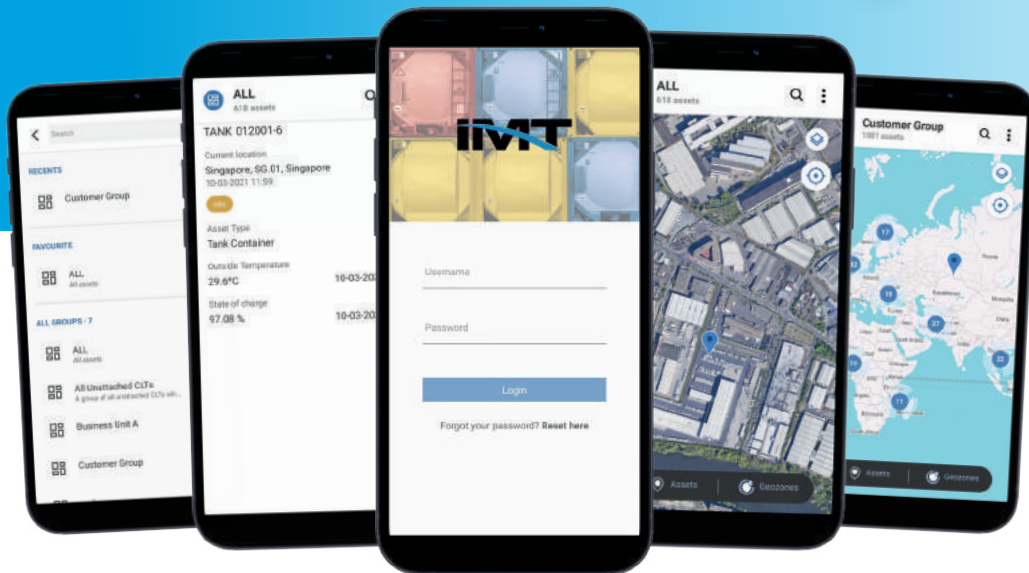
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