

A day in the life of..... Gustaaf Zeeman

Gustaaf Zeeman is Managing Director of European Machine Trading (EMT), a producer and supplier of bulk blending and bagging systems and associated bagged/bulk materials handling equipment. EMT is family owned and operated – Gustaaf's brother Janco holds the key role of Technical Director. EMT is run as a "tight ship", with everyone, including the Directors, turning their hands to whatever is needed in a crisis.

As such, selecting a typical day in the life of Gustaaf is a difficult task. Four or five times a year, Gustaaf makes sales trips to attend conferences, usually as a standholder, where he keeps in touch with many existing customers and meets potential new clients. Occasionally, he assists his brother Janco and the company technicians with an installation at the site of a new client, although, of late, his activity on this front has been confined to installations in new markets in tropical areas, for example Malaysia.

With these provisos in mind, Focus decided to follow Gustaaf around at his office and environs in 't Zand, The Netherlands.

Gustaaf leaves home shortly after 7 am for the trip to the office. "Unlike most of you in London, I do not have a long commute to work", he quips. It takes him a minute to walk to his office...

It is Gustaaf's first day in the office after visiting overseas clients... and he has another trip to organize as he will be attending an FMB fertilizer conference shortly. So, upon arriving at the office, he has to check through the accumulated mail that has been left by his secretary on his desk in his absence. He also



Gustaaf with his secretary Yvonne.

looks at his e-mail inbox and replies to any urgent e-mails in the appropriate manner. "Another potential client wants to see me at the next FMB," he comments. "Looks like being a busy meeting."

Its 8.15 am and Gustaaf is on the move again. He returns home for breakfast – a cup of tea and some sandwiches – and then back to the office in time to see the EMT staff arrive for work. He has a chat with his secretary, asking her about how she has spent the past weekend and seeing if any problems have arisen while he was away on his most recent trip. "We are a small, family run business with a committed staff. There are 4 in the office and around 15 in the company as a whole, including the technical and factory staff, so it is important for me to know if any of the staff have any personal issues for the smooth running of the business".

Gustaaf returns to his desk with a coffee and proceeds with his work. Following his trip, he has a number of proposals to put together. "In the past, our proposals were mailed. Then, the telefax was king. Today, 99% of our proposals are forwarded by e-mail," he noted. "I work on these proposals but the secretaries here, notably Marchiena and Yvonne, are crucial as they knock them into shape for me."

"Our proposals are put together with the help of our clients; they know best what their market is and their aims are. Generally, we visit the

proposed site for the installation so that we can see first-hand any potential problems and advise accordingly. We discuss the client's requirements with the customer and base the proposal and quotation on these discussions. Fine-tuning of proposals can happen further down the line."

"The range of equipment supplied can vary significantly. We have a wide range of standard bulk blending and bagging machines plus associated bulk/bagged materials handling equipment which can be put together in a manner tailored to the requirements of the client and his production site. However, we also have in stock a range of second-hand blending equipment originally manufactured by a number of different producers; we will incorporate one of these units into a blending line if that produces the most cost-effective solution from the client's viewpoint."

"Alternatively, if a blending/handling problem cannot be addressed effectively with a line based on our standard equipment, we can develop a specific machinery solution for the client in question. I work closely with Janco and our technical staff, notably our Autocad 3D drawings wizard Arjan Glas, on equipment conundrums of this nature. This flexibility and adaptability stands us in good stead; it was instrumental in a recent award for a line in Estonia, for example."

"In Estonia, I visited Tallinn to see Mr. Andrus Uus, Managing Director of AS DBT, a long-term customer of EMT. DBT is involved in blending and filling of big bags of fertilizer for export, among other activities. Our meeting revolved around commercial and technical details for a new product that we were supplying to DBT, a container fill and weighing machine or Automatic Container Bulk Weigher, a 200 tph throughput FIBC bagging line including very accurate weighing technology, all housed inside a standard container. Janco and his technical staff at EMT worked in conjunction with DBT on the custom design and development of this particular machine."

Gustaaf leaves the office to visit the factory, just a five minute walk away. "I generally spend around 30 minutes each day in the factory, checking on the progress being made on the construction of various pieces of equipment, discussing any changes that have been e-mailed through by the client, reviewing technical drawings with Janco and Arjan and so forth. As I have mentioned, all of our machines are built to the specifications laid out by the customer. On average, a complete installation, comprising a blender, bagging line and associated equipment, takes around 12 weeks to build at our factory."

Gustaaf pointed at a partly assembled machine currently receiving attention from EMT technicians. "You remember we were taking earlier about the order from DBT in Tallinn? Well, the unit over there employs a similar concept. It is a new type of transportable unit for bagging FIBCs. As it is based upon standard container units, it can be transported swiftly between sites, for example from the quayside to an inland factory; set-up time on site is very quick as well. I saw that there was room in the market for such a unit."

The noon bell tolls; it is time for lunch. Gustaaf walks home where he enjoys a simple repast – sandwiches, milk and tea. He returns to the office promptly at 1 pm. "Clients often drop into the office for a discussion about a project," he comments. "We pick them up from the airport – it is only around an hour away – and then take them on a tour of the factory, discuss their project, take them to lunch and so on. If they have time, we show them the sights; some of them stay-over in Amsterdam."

5.30 pm comes around all too soon....but Gustaaf returns home anyway. "Improved communications are a great boon to a company such as ours. While the office is open from around 8.30 am to 5.00 pm, Janco and myself are always available if the telephone should ring after office hours. We are an international company and need to address issues promptly, even if they arise in different time zones. "

"If a customer calls with a problem relating to a machine or production line, Janco, who is in

charge of after-sales customer care, will first try to solve this problem from a distance by telephone or e-mail. Alternatively, we can take control of the customer's computer to see what the problem might be. Sometimes, a spare part

will be required that can be fitted easily by the client; this part can be dispatched swiftly from the factory to ensure minimum plant downtime. In some instances, our technicians will need to visit the customer to fix the problem." ■

The EMT office and assembly buildings.



Inside the EMT workshop.



An EMT Weighcont blending machine leaves the factory.