

Mega Manitowoc

Just when the crane industry was awash with rumours that Manitowoc would shortly buy a mobile crane manufacturer, the famous crawler crane manufacturer astounded the lifting industry by buying Potain, one of the two largest tower crane manufacturers in the world. The deal is worth US\$300 million (approximately £200 million) and is subject to approval by various anti-competition authorities.

Discussions on the mega deal commenced at Intermat last year, but industry observers assumed they had petered out without success. However, in one of the industry's best kept secrets, the discussions continued and were finalised at the beginning of March.

So why has Manitowoc bought Potain, and what will it mean to customers? Speaking to *Cranes & Access* from Lyon, France just after he had completed the deal, Rob Giebel, president of the Manitowoc Crane Group, said there were three aims to the acquisition:

- "to obtain new products in the lifting industry
- "to strengthen our international dealer network, and
- "to enhance our international manufacturing opportunities"

Asked whether he planned any radical changes at Potain, Giebel replied: "No" adding: "It has great products and a great management team: If it ain't broke, why fix it?"

Manitowoc has pulled off an audacious coup. It has bought Potain. The move transforms Manitowoc into a true world player and gives it one of the best dealer networks in the world plus ownership of Lifflux

Tim Whiteman reports



Rob Giebel, president of the Manitowoc Crane Group has pulled off a major coup

He further confirmed that no redundancies or closures were expected at Potain's manufacturing facilities in France, Germany, Italy, Portugal or

China. Potain's current chairman, Mr Bouffault, continues in the same position.

The deal brings together Manitowoc's strong US and Middle East dealer network and Potain's excellent European and Far East contacts. Potain currently has more than 50 per cent market share in Germany, an area of especial interest to Manitowoc. In the UK both companies have their own companies and will need to formulate a strategy. Larry Weyers, vice president sales with Manitowoc, told *C&A* that he firmly believed that "tower crane people can also sell crawler cranes and vice versa". This was echoed by Giebel, who said his philosophy was to create a company able to supply all on-site lifting needs. He did not rule out the possibility that Manitowoc might still buy a mobile crane manufacturer, saying only that the company was in a very strong financial position. He added that the Lifflux range of scissors, which belongs to Potain, would be focussed on construction related products rather than "in-door or industrial".

- *Manitowoc Crane Group builds lattice boom crawler and truck mounted cranes. It also builds loader cranes. It has a total workforce of about 800 employees and a turnover of nearly \$300 million. Potain builds about 80 different tower cranes at eight locations around the world and has a total workforce of about 2200. It's current turnover is also nearly \$300 million.*