

Riwal success based on people

C&A

face to face

Dutch based access rental company, Riwal is the largest privately owned access rental company in Europe and has been the largest European purchaser of aerial lifts for the past two years. In January the company placed its orders for 2006 to 2007, ordering over 2,000 new platforms, worth in excess of €80 million. At the same time It confirmed that it is setting up its fifth full service rental business, surprisingly in France. Cranes&Access visited Riwal's Dordrecht headquarters in mid January and spoke to owners Doron Livnat and Dick Schalekamp.



The Riwal team in Dordrecht

Riwal has expanded rapidly over the past few years, and established operations in Israel, Denmark and last year Slovenia. The company is now the leading powered access rental company in Holland, Israel and Denmark and it says that Slovenia will only be a matter of time. Its latest venture though is in France the biggest market that it has entered to date. Why France? we asked.

"France was not in our sights for this year but talking with Jacques Catinot we saw the type of person that we know will be successful as a partner in the Riwal family" said Livnat "and France, like Denmark, is also only a trucking day away from our base here at Dordrecht". Jacques Catinot was previously responsible for European sales and marketing at Genie, departing in December to set up the new venture.

"We are building our business around people, we will not open anywhere unless we have the right person, and that means someone who has been in the industry, someone who knows the bad times as well as the good times. You cannot easily instil this experience into people from outside the industry" He continued. "Our key partners must

also be able to do in their countries what we do here in Holland. We want to have the same spirit wherever we work. It is a serious business and requires 120 percent commitment".

Riwal France is already operational, from shared premises near Chartres. "The aim is to have the new operation properly established by mid year, eventually in a building and location specific to our needs and suitable for

France" He continued.

The two said that Riwal "does not intend to create a storm in France, there is enough room in the market for us to find a place without unsettling anyone. While we like to lead a market, we do not expect to be a market leader in France, it is a big country. It is also not our aim to 'buy-into' the market". When it comes to rental rates Schalekamp



The three owners of Riwal L-R Jaap Schalekamp, Doron Livnat and Dick Schalekamp.

the long term" said Schalekamp. In France the fleet will not be as JLG orientated as it is in Holland, we have ordered Genie, Holland Lift and Aichi for

was very firm that Riwal is not a rate cutter. "We have never started a price war nor will we. It is not what we do. "We trade on service and quality".

"We have increased our actual net rental income per unit by four to five percent in each of the past five years. Who else can honestly say they have done that?"

In addition to the massive fleet investment the company is also investing in new buildings such as a tripling of its workshop space in Dordrecht, purpose built premises for the new French operation and €1.5 million on a new IT system that will integrate everything the company does.

With the fleet growing to over 5,500 units by the end of the year, the largest single aerial lift rental location in Europe if not the world (1,500 units based in Dordrecht) and consistent growth now for over 10 years what is the company's secret or Philosophy for success we asked?

"We are a lean company, we have a maximum of three layers of staff from the man that cleans the machines to us and every employee is fully empowered. For example we run 25 trucks in Dordrecht and yet have no transport or logistics department".

"The Process is important, from the first call we get to the payment of the invoice. Between these two there are many steps and many opportunities to screw up. We want our people to simply say YES! The customer is not interested in why or why not, He is not interested in excuses and reasons, he just wants



One of a batch of six 22m Tadano Super-Decks, demonstrates the increase in specialist machines for the fleet.

to hear "yes it will be taken care of" and know that it will". "The answer is always Yes! The question is just how? "is it OK if we deliver between these times or those? If a certain machine is not available can we substitute it with this one or that? Saying YES is our philosophy, end of story!" "Yes we will take care of it".

"The markets might be a little different but the principles are the same, the processes are the same. It might need some slight fine tuning but the basics are the same everywhere. We expect our Partners to have the same exact values as we do, they can then easily make decisions because they now what we would do, there is a Riwal way and



One of the workshops where Rival prepares new machines for sale or for the fleet.

it must be instinctive". "We must simply help them to manage the process"

The two claim that there is very little employee turnover at Rival, "when we recruit new people everyone who will work with that person takes part in the selection process and must be happy. It means that out of 10 candidates only one or two will be suitable. Once on board new "team members spend time getting to know all aspects of the business, for example all new sales

staff (internal or external) must spend the first few weeks getting to know the company. "They must spend a few days on the delivery trucks, including the early morning shifts! then in the service area, with the dispatchers etc. This way they understand all aspects of delivering our service, all steps of the Rival process if you like" said Livnat. "If someone lasts the first three months then they usually stay for the long term".

The company has been working on a new integrated Information system for well over a year now and hopes to have it fully operational during the first half of 2006.

"Our new IT system is taking longer to implement than we had hoped", said Livnat "but this is because we are making the software work around what our people do, they know very well how to do their job, the system must work for them, rather than them working for the system."

Schalekamp adds "The aim is to bring together all the different IT programmes we are running into an integrated system so that all of our partners can see what is going on throughout the company, they can see what stock or what machines are available". "We also want to avoid all duplication of effort, if the dispatcher has entered a customers name when he books the order, we don't want the accounts or any other person to have to enter it again. Doing work that another member of the team has already done frustrates our people".

Rival has 170 employees in Holland, 35 in Denmark, 55 in Israel, with Slovenia and France added in they expect to top 300 later this year.

So how do you decide what to buy and when we asked?

"We are continually lowering the average age of our fleet, it is already under three years old. There are only two people in the company who purchase machines, (indicating the two of them) although everyone has their input, all of our partners input their plans, needs and wishes, we then roll this into an overall shopping list and work with manufacturers to schedule the units in a way that works both for them and for us". C&A



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