

More training, the best investment for the future

Competitive production plants demand good, well-considered investment, but people play an important role as well as machines. What good are the best machines if this high-performance equipment cannot be fully utilised by the operating personnel? Targeted training and further education is required. These and other considerations have led to the "winding school" of the Italian A. Celli Nonwovens company.

Without highly modern production nothing goes. This applies especially to the intense competition in the nonwovens quantity markets: ever faster and more efficient machines are required. Machine stoppages must be avoided, and this requires well-trained operators.

A vicious circle

As one of the leading suppliers of high-performance winders and slitter-rewinders, A. Celli Nonwovens s.p.a. is confronted in many of the world's markets with variously

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trained personnel. The spiral is well known: on the one hand, poorly trained personnel often results in machine stoppage and queries to the machine manufacturer. On the other hand, workers, who could be employed more efficiently, are tied up etc. etc. in this way. Targeted training can help to break through this spiral. The "winding school" has come into being against this background. How that happened is

explained by the proprietor, Dr. Alessandro Celli (*Fig. 1*) in an interview with the *INDUSTRIAL FABRICS BULLETIN*.

Market situation

First of all however, the *IFB* wanted Dr. Celli to tell how he sees his company's current business.

Dr. Alessandro Celli (AC): I must say that we can't complain at the moment. The initial results show that we've increased our business by about 10% as compared with last year. On the other hand, business is becoming more difficult. The markets are no longer what they were a few years ago, and we are doing double the work for the same results. Despite that, we're looking at 2004 with confidence. Our order books are not yet full, but our prospects are good.

IFB: How do you see the markets?

AC: We've virtually won back the USA, and are receiving large orders from South America. The economy in the Americas is on the move again. Bigger orders are also coming in from Europe, while things are moving a little again in Asia too.

IFB: Do you also have problems with the market situation?

AC: We travel a great deal, going to as many exhibitions as possible, not least because we have to follow the customers in order to win orders. And as mentioned before, numerous suppliers chase every order. Consequently, we have always to be present. There is also the fact that the exchange rate between the EURO and the USD is no help either in improving the situation. And since the Chinese currency is linked with the USD, the



Fig. 1: Dr. Alessandro Celli, proprietor of A. Celli Nonwovens: "I'm all for the free market, and against protection. Only the best can win".
Picture: JR

dollar exchange rate also has a part to play in the Asian market.

IFB: There is a great deal of copying going on throughout the world. Is that a topic for you?

AC: That is the case unfortunately. We've found some exact copies

a week. Our services can be requested by telephone even over the Christmas period. Our technicians can be contacted in three of our world-wide branches – in China, for Asian customers, in the USA for North and South America, and here in Italy for Europe of course.

the degree of training of the operating personnel?

AC: Yes it does, the operator is the most important factor.

IFB: When you sell machines, is customer "basic training" included in the price? Or how does it work?

AC: A machine sale is a complete package, including basic training on the machine here in our premises in Italy, and later, in the customer's plant when the machine is installed on the production site.

IFB: What are the biggest obstacles in customer training?

AC: Language can be a problem, since we sell our machines throughout the world. For us Europeans, the training of Chinese or Japanese operators for example is not a simple matter, and must not be underestimated.



Fig. 2: Training is the precise reason for the "winding school". This event has now been implemented every year, once in the USA and once in Italy. Picture: A. Celli Nonwovens

of our machines. To counter this trend, we patent everything we can, and what we must do of course is constantly to introduce to the market new and even better products with the most modern technology, so that we're always one step ahead of our imitators.

IFB: Do you think the WTO should be effective here in bringing imitators rather more within bounds from 2005 onwards?

Service reinforcement

AC: I'm for the free market. I'm against protection in other words. My opinion is clear: only the best can win.

IFB: Can intensified service put a brake on this trend?

AC: Absolutely. And that's one of the points we've mainly focused on for the past two years: the constant extension of our services. We're ready 24 hours a day, 7 days

IFB: The market is continually asking for more. Is this a world-wide trend?

AC: Of course, we're in a global market. Innovation and technology are the keys, and our policy is always to offer the customer a product which will give him an advantage over the other suppliers in the market. The user of our machines has to understand precisely what the advantages of these products are.

Customer training

IFB: The subject of training has been brought up again and again in our ITS surveys. What's the position regarding training when you're thinking of your customers?

AC: That's a very important point, and we need to extend this training considerably.

IFB: Does the performance of a machine stand and fall not least by

The different cultures, and of course the basic training of the people in the relevant countries, can lead to difficulties. And what I would really like to mention is readiness to learn, without which there can be no success.

IFB: Recently you started to implement the so-called "winding school" at your headquarters. Is this targeted to training?

AC: That's the precise reason why we've started our "winding school", and have placed it right in the forefront (*fig. 2*). This has now been implemented every year, once in the USA and once here in Italy. Participant reactions are encouraging, and initial results are very good.

IFB: Who takes part on these events?

AC: Primarily mill managers and machine operators who would like to improve their knowledge of slitting and winding. And once again, people who want to get the best out of our machines.

Everyone wins

IFB: What are your most important findings from these initial events in the USA and Europe?

AC: Events of this type bring many advantages. The participants are trained in great detail, kept up to date, are highly motivated, and get answers to questions which they can't otherwise ask. Of most importance is the fact that they see other people who are doing the same job, and knowledge is transferred directly between all the people involved (*fig. 3*). This know-how is underpinned by a questionnaire. I think our machines are only 50% utilised in many works. We want to and can enormously increase this effectiveness by means of this course.

IFB: We shouldn't underestimate the fact that the participants develop a closer relationship with the machine supplier?

AC: Of course, but not only that. They now know our service technicians directly and personally, which enormously facilitates communication between supplier and customer.

Low costs

IFB: What about the costs?

AC: We don't want to earn anything from this course, and we calculate only specific costs, not effective costs. And both win in the end: due to the training we receive fewer calls, while customers enjoy a higher degree of machine efficiency.

IFB: Modernisation is another possibility of increasing production. Do you also offer optimisation packages for older machines?

AC: Yes, that's also an important part of our work. We've always brought older machines up to the latest state of the art, we've now significantly activated this activity, and today we offer a choice of various optimisation packages with transparent costs.

IFB: And what is your experience to date?

AC: Very good, whether it be machine parts or software. Well maintained and optimised machines also cause fewer problems, or even none, consequently increasing efficiency of course.

IFB: Increasing numbers of producers no longer carry out maintenance work themselves on their machines, but pass it on to the

tion 10 years ago, what's the biggest difference for you as a machinery manufacturer?

AC: Markets have changed enormously. Many new firms are in the market, many have gone, or have merged with other firms. We work today with much bigger firms, which have to be treated much more professionally in any relationship. The nonwovens market is much more contested than it was 10 years ago. Margins are smaller,



Fig. 3: AC: Events of this type bring many advantages. Of most importance is the fact that they see other people who are doing the same job, and knowledge is transferred directly between all the people involved. Picture: A. Celli Nonwovens

machine suppliers. What's the situation in your company?"

AC: We also quote our customers a package with various services for this. I must say however that this has not been so successful to date.

IFB: Why is that so?

AC: When the economic situation is not at its best, customers cut down on everything where they see no direct disadvantage. And that's also evidently the case with maintenance work, but I believe the demand for this service will rise as soon as the market recovers once more.

Changing markets

IFB: When you compare customer requirements today with the situa-

and demands on us as machinery manufacturers are consequently increasing. 10 years ago everything was OK, everyone was making money easily. Only the best survive today.

IFB: How do you see the immediate future of A. Celli Nonwovens?

AC: We're still investing large sums in research and development in order to be the best in the class in our sector, and to stay there too over the next 10 - 20 years.

We have some new projects ready, and will introduce new, innovative products to the market, which will provide our customers with further means of staying at the top. And, as I've said already, may the best man win.

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