Steam Powered Investment

Deublin Company moves forward with a new business unit that can help papermakers squeeze every bit of energy from a pound of steam.— By Jack O'Brien

In 2004, Deublin Company began laying the groundwork for a business unit designed to complement its existing steam joints and siphons business based on the concept of offering engineering, analysis and an array of additional services to pulp and paper manufacturers.

The new company, Deublin Steam Systems LLC, was officially announced on December 1, 2004 by Don Deubler, Chairman and CEO. "We have established a Steam Systems business to complement our existing equipment supply business. Our expectation for the Steam Systems business will be to support and expand our product and service offerings to the pulp and paper industry," Deubler told his employees.

Located in Buford, Georgia, the new Steam Systems business became fully operational by January 1, 2005.

Two industry experts, Ray Krumenacker and Pekka Kormano, both from Metso Paper, were named to head the new business. As Krumenacker explains, "Deublin Steam Systems LLC not only provides direct support to Deublin Company, but also does stand-alone work". In that regard, he says, "we are currently focused on North America, but our direction is definitely global."

In its capacity as a steam systems service provider to the paper industry, the Steam Systems group handles engineering design, conceptual planning, and process troubleshooting for new and rebuilt paper machines—"anything having to do with steam and condensate systems and dryer system optimization in general," Krumenacker notes.

"The company", he adds, "recently worked out an agreement to handle steam systems work in North America for Metso Paper".

"We've been very busy since Deublin Steam Systems was formed at the first of the year," Krumenacker says, "doing process audits, project quotes, etc. In fact, we have quotes for numerous projects in Asia. In North America, we have completed more than 20 studies and audits since the establishment of the company involving updates/upsizing of equipment and components, checking out performance, etc."

Ray Krumenacker outside Deublin Steam Systems in Buford, Georgia.

Although very few new paper machines are planned for North America in the near future, many of the existing machines will be converted to modern stationary siphon systems. "These projects will require steam systems support, which is where we come in," Krumenacker emphasizes. Globally, he says, "we are currently setting the business structure and staffing to handle projects in China and Asia, South America, Europe, as well as North America. It's an exciting time for us."

Rob O'Brien, Vice President, Sales & Marketing of Deublin Company explains that the recent restructuring measures taken throughout the paper industry has reduced manpower within the mills, fueling demand for outside service. "As a long-established equipment company, we saw

the need to offer more than just our equipment. Our ability to now work with a mill and provide expertise in the paper machine's steam system and dryer section will optimize the operation of our equipment on the machine, creating a more efficient paper making process," says O'Brien.

According to Deublin, from an energy standpoint, the dryer section is the largest consumer of steam energy in a paper machine, typically accounting for 55% of the total machine energy costs. "For example, [a mill] saving a mere 10,000 pounds per hour of steam in leaks and venting could save over $250,000 per year," O'Brien said.

Deublin Steam Systems' capabilities include:

- Machine Audits
- System Evaluation
- Performance Reports
- System Design
- System Equipment Supply
- System Installation
- Field Service
- Start-up Services
- Warranty Support

With the average age of paper machines in the U.S. being over 23 years old, the domestic market alone demonstrates a growing need for Deublin's expanded services. "Many older paper machines, and even many newer ones, have steam systems that can be optimized to eliminate steam loss and improve sheet quality," O'Brien adds.

Ron Kelner, President and COO of Deublin Company emphasizes that Deublin Company is focused globally and has operations in many areas around the world. He also points out that each region has its own unique way of doing things. "The requirements in North America differ from those in, say, Asia. This is why we continue to make large investments in our facilities around the world. It's essential that we are responsive enough to cater to the specific needs of each country's market. The way they do things in China is different than in Europe or North America or South America. To help bridge the cultural gap, we have a number 'local' people running our offshore businesses," Kelner said.

(l-r) Ron Kelner, Jack O'Brien and Rob O'Brien got together at Deublin Company's headquarters in Waukegan, Illinois to discuss the new Steam Systems group.

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"This company was built from the beginning to bring identical quality of product and service anywhere in the world," Kelner added. "Recently, we established a new manufacturing facility in China, Deublin (Dalian) Precision Rotating Unions Company, Ltd. This is a brand new, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility that features the latest modern CNC machines and manufacturing technology. We are excited about our growth and expansion in the Asian market."

As far as future growth goes, Kelner states, "We've had very strong growth despite the economic challenges the industry has faced. We expect that our basic business will grow market share by expanding. It will also grow by our ability to truly facilitate and service all regions of the world. And finally, we will grow by product line. The addition of Deublin Steam Systems is all part of our company product line strategy." ■