

NOT JUST A PIECE OF PAPER



Bruno Giannelli, founder and partner of Fomat, describes his company's range of paper-making components to Packaging Europe's Barbara Rossi, highlighting its focus on innovation, high-quality and energy efficiency.

Fomat is based near Lucca, northern Tuscany, where it was founded by Bruno Giannelli in 1973. It started as a commercial company, supplying quality service and innovative products to the renowned local paper industry. The company evolved very rapidly, starting to manufacture its own solutions and expanding its geographical markets. Today it serves customers the world over, supplying high quality and energy efficient products and complex systems to the paper industry. Fomat serves both paper-making machine producers and paper mills.

It comprises three divisions: Technologies, Aerothermic and Automation. The Technologies division deals with all the standard products necessary for high precision paper processing machines. It offers a wide product range, including felt and wire cleaning systems, water filters, basis weight control valves, monoflow and duoflow rotary joints, cooling and corrugator joints, Yankee Doctor blade oscillators, edge cutters and tail cutters, electro-pneumatic positioners, and Yankee coating systems.

The aerothermic division takes care of complex systems dealing with air and steam handling. Its focus is on paper drying and creating a healthy paper mill environment. Its range of systems includes closed and Yankee hoods, hall ventilation, Yankee head insulation, and dust and mist removal solutions, as well as steam systems for tissue machines and corrugators.



Finally, the automation division is focussed on paper mill management and process control, offering quality control and distributed control systems. The latter are necessary for the correct functioning of highly automated mills, which are on the increase due to high competition in the paper sector.

"All our divisions are very important," Mr Giannelli remarks. "Our aim is that of providing optimal solutions for our customers' needs. The solutions we provide to paper mills are always tailor-made, in order to fulfil this objective. Even the components that we provide to paper-making machine manufacturers are customised, according to the energy needs of the country in which their final customer is based. The component is manufactured so as to be able to offer the best possible energy efficiency according to energy costs in the country in question. We are able to supply 40 per cent of the components needed by paper-making machines. We only serve the best machine manufacturers, as our products are at the high-end of the market in terms of quality."

Innovation, quality and energy efficiency

"Energy efficiency, quality and ease of use are at the very heart of what we do," states Mr Giannelli. "For this reason, innovation is a must. We hold several patents and have a test machine to use for our R&D trials. As well as carrying out internal research on a continuous basis, and having an engineer fully assigned to this activity, we also collaborate with the University of Pisa."

He continues:

"In October we had an Open House event and took our customers to visit a small paper mill to show them what we had been able to achieve, despite the small space available. As well as being remarkable in terms of space saving, our solution is outstanding with regard to energy efficiency, as it offers a 30 per cent energy saving. Moreover, it is more environmentally friendly, because its waste fumes only reach a temperature of 100°.

This energy efficiency was possible thanks to our Integrex product, a heat exchanger and boiler. Basically, the burner only ignites to produce the small amount of steam that it is needed. The space saving result was possible through the use of a combo solution. As all its components are pre-assembled at our premises, this solution also minimises machine downtime during installation and future upgrades, as the necessary work can be carried out in only seven days."

The company operates from a sole site, comprising four buildings – with planning permission gained to build a further facility here. All production takes place at these premises, because the company has a vertical production model, internally taking care of



all the necessary production processes, from raw steel to final product. No outsourcing or delocalisation strategies are employed.

“We purchase the best steel for our products and buy our production machinery from top-range suppliers,” Mr Giannelli explains. “For instance, we have recently purchased a fibre optic laser cutter from a top-quality Japanese supplier, which allows us to offer an even higher cutting-precision level, alongside further reducing our energy consumption. We have also purchased numeric control lathes and cutters from the same supplier.”

Thanks to its experience in steam handling and paper drying, Fomat can also serve any company needing these processes, even if they belong to other industries. Moreover, it offers spare parts and efficient customer service, including remote assistance. This is also offered to indirect customers, in other words those served through paper-making machine manufacturers.

Global outreach

Geographically, the company supplies its solutions all over the world. “We have customers all over Europe, North and South America, Africa, the Middle East and Australia, as well as Japan and Korea,” says Mr Giannelli. “We serve customers in every market that demands high-quality products. For this reason, at present we do not supply China or India, although should they start requiring this type of products in the future, we will be ready work with them.”

Organic growth is expected, but although no acquisitions are currently planned, they could appear on the company’s horizon in the future, should the right opportunity present itself. Mr Giannelli concludes:



“Our future is one of innovation. We have new cleaning systems for felt and wires which are currently been piloted. I expect significant demand for them, as they offer better cleaning results, while lowering water consumption. We will also bring to the market products and complex systems with increased energy efficiency, which I think will be successful, as I believe that reducing energy consumption will continue to be a vital factor for any manufacturing company, because oil prices might be going down, but gas is still expensive.” □

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