

Case Study on:



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Ruban
D'Honneur
2011

Ruban D'Honneur Recipient

European Business Awards 2011

The Chairman's Selection
Gripple Ltd

European
Business
Awards™

Gripple

Flying in the face of recession

Words from the Judges

“Ambitious expansion and innovation have seen Gripple Ltd achieve excellent growth during this difficult economic climate.”



The worldwide market leader in the supply of patented wire joining and suspension products, Gripple Ltd is a well-deserved recipient of the European Business Awards Ruban D'Honneur for The Chairman's Selection. The accolade has been given in recognition of the fact that Gripple Ltd is growing rapidly in an industry sector that has been in decline over the past three years.

The employees at Gripple Ltd pride themselves on being **masters of Ideas & Innovation**. They are the trailblazers of the wire tensioning world who, since 2008, have registered an astounding 19 pieces of intellectual property and currently have over 27 active projects on the books. These new products have been developed by Gripple's dynamic 'Ideas and Innovation' team which has more than doubled in size over the last two years. The company spends around 5% of its turnover on R&D and never rests on its laurels. Gripple is always on the lookout for problems to solve, new products to invent, ways to improve efficiency and new territories to explore – the company is on a never-ending journey of innovation.

“Open-mindedness is the biggest, most important thing you've got to have. A can-do attitude and the expertise to turn ideas into reality come a pretty close second. At Gripple, we have all of these attributes and a whole lot more.” Hugh Facey, Founder, Gripple Ltd.

Innovation is at the heart of everything that Gripple does and is the driving force behind the company's success. Everyone in the company believes in the power of ideas and employees are encouraged to uncover problems and to come up with solutions. The flexible, open structure of the business allows anyone and everyone to be heard.

The company is committed to deriving 25% of sales from products launched in the previous four years and is currently exceeding this target.



In contrast to the trend of global recession, the last three years (2008-2011) have been a period of great advancement for Gripple with growing sales and profits. Underpinning the company's recent success has been the launch of three innovative new products, the Gripple Universal Clamp, the Gripple Express and the Gripple Catenaries system.

Gripple Universal Clamp

It was a member of Gripple's French sales team who identified that the existing method of securing pipes was both cumbersome and time consuming. He was sure that Gripple could find a way to overcome this problem and reported back his findings. Less than three months later, the Gripple Universal Clamp was being produced on an automated assembly machine which had been designed and built in-house. Just three months after that, the clamp was launched and is on track to deliver sales on track to deliver substantial sales in 2011. As for the guy in the French sales team, he's back out in the field finding more problems to solve.

“Our structure is one of flexibility. Once we have a game changing idea, we back it and in a very short space of time it goes from an idea, through sketch to rapid prototype to solution. We are not encumbered by layers of decision-making so will make investment decisions quickly and generally bring products to market in less than six months. We ensure the manufacture is undertaken in the most efficient, environmentally-friendly manner.” Alan Somerfield, Ideas and Innovation Director, Gripple Ltd.



“Innovation in the supply of specialist tensioning equipment to the agricultural and industrial sectors has proven to be the key to success in what may appear to be superficially a traditional and mature sector. Exploiting the application of a strong R&D approach has enabled Gripple to achieve excellent growth on a national and international scale in an industry that has generally struggled in the prevailing economic climate.”

Phil Forrest, Chairman of Judges, European Business Awards 2011

Looking to the Future...

There will always be problems that require solutions...

Gripple is always looking to the future, making plans and expanding operations. It is not a company that will ever sit still. There are already new projects in the pipeline including the launch of a new ground anchor product that supports erosion control and will make a significant difference in countries where agriculture has expanded into areas of less stable terrain.

Alongside the existing Agricultural and Industrial product ranges, the company's recent innovations are moving Gripple in new territories. Gripple has recently launched subsidiaries in Brazil and India and is already on the lookout for the next market opportunity.

In 2010, all UK employees and over 95% of international employees became shareholders. In 2011, nine employees became directors of the GLIDE board. GLIDE (Growth Led Innovation, Driven Employees) is our employee ownership framework. It is a scheme that gives all shareholders a say in the strategic direction of the business. The GLIDE board is voted for by staff and also has representation of the shareholder board. Hugh Facey is gifting Gripple shares to the GLIDE employee trust, ensuring a long term sustainable future for Gripple.

“We have a democratic and accountable ownership structure with distinct shareholder and management boards. Without doubt our staff are our greatest asset. They have driven our success, and it is only right they have a loud voice in the development and future of the business.” Hugh Facey, Founder, Gripple Ltd.

The business is wholly committed to the concept of continual improvement. Other future plans include additional investment to increase the level of automation in the assembly processes and producing more components in-house.



In terms of learning and development, Gripple has the embryonic Gripple Academy, which provides learning and coaching for staff and is the conduit for 'Leading the Future'; a programme for aspiring leaders who are set to be the next generation of managers. Gripple also has a school scheme that it is continuing to expand. Currently the company has relationships with over 30 local schools, colleges and universities that take part in a well-developed programme of placements. Who knows, maybe this is where they will discover Gripple's new MD!

One area that can't be ignored is **sustainability**. Gripple has a dedicated environmental task force committed to improving its environmental footprint. In the last two years the company supported the **10:10 campaign** with the goal of reducing Gripple's carbon footprint by 10%. The Gripple system saves its users significant amounts of carbon per year versus the traditional method of steel rod. Gripple actively saves carbon every time a customer in converted to its more sustainable products.

For every metre of wire rope switched from threaded rod, there is a 1.2kg carbon saving.





"Receiving this honour is a true mark of distinction and testament to the effort and commitment of our staff who own the company as shareholders and benefit from its success. Their passion continues to drive the company and has resulted in Gripple being recognised as a leader in its fields. The anticipation of the awards ceremony is already building."



Mark Edmonds, Managing Director, Gripple

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About Gripple

Gripple was founded on a damp day in 1986, when wire salesman and budding entrepreneur Hugh Facey found himself on a wet hillside in Wales discussing the woes of fencing with a frustrated farmer who was aggravated that he was still joining fence wires in much the same way as his father and grandfather had done before him. He couldn't believe that with all the advances in technology the past decades had seen, there was no better way to connect two pieces of wire together.

Three years later, Gripple Ltd. came into existence, and today the company is the worldwide market leader in the supply of patented wire joining and suspension products. Gripple initially became synonymous with fencing, trellising and viticulture in agriculture but in 1998, Hugh and his development team had a "Eureka moment" which allowed them to successfully enter the construction market. The team realised that by turning the Gripple by 90 degrees, they had the perfect suspension product and Gripple is now a global market leader in the suspension of mechanical and electrical services.

Today there is one Gripple produced every second.

The Gripple strategy is simple. Discover a problem; find a solution that improves customer advantage and offers great value for money; build the new product using world class machinery designed and built in-house and finally bring the product to market while simultaneously searching for another problem to overcome.

Gripple is owned by its 300 employees. The company is headquartered in Sheffield with European operations being centred in Obernai in France and the USA being managed from Chicago. Its European annual turnover is over €22.4 million with further growth forecast for 2011. The company has customers in over 80 countries and supplies in excess of 30 million Gripples each year. Over 80% of its sales are made outside of the UK.

The Gripple alchemy is a mix of innovation, employee ownership, world-class manufacturing, global vision, sustainability and a large shot of good humour too.



About the European Business Awards

Since 2007, the European Business Awards programme has been shining a light on the most pioneering businesses on the continent by promoting excellence, best practice and innovation in the European business community. The awards programme recognises excellence in all disciplines of business including individual business functions. Last year entrants ranged from fish farming organisations to renewable energy firms. Together they had a combined turnover greater than €766 billion Euros (6% of EU GDP) and employed over three and a half million people between them.

Businesses from each of the 28 European territories are invited to enter the Awards. The competition for finalist places is fierce with many of the Europe's most established brands being represented.

The judging panel is comprised of experts in their fields who each bring experience, business acumen and understanding to the board. The overall winners in each of the categories will be announced at the Awards ceremony in Barcelona on 22nd November 2011.

