

press release**Release Date :****WC132 – (11/10)****Version 2 : 24 Nov. 2010****Rautomead's recipe for success: to achieve best practice, it's best to practice**

When Rautomead Limited Chairman Sir Michael Nairn decided to check on the company's latest RS 3000 fully automated continuous copper casting installation for leading Bulgarian copper cable producer Elkabel, he didn't just pick up the phone or send an email. He went out to Bulgaria in person to meet with senior Elkabel management and see for himself how the new equipment was working. It was another example of the single-minded focus on customer service and the personal touch that have established Rautomead as global market leaders in the design and manufacture of continuous casting equipment for the wire and cable, foundry and precious metal industries.

Elkabel. A dynamic way of conducting business

With its headquarters in Bourgas, Elkabel was the very first Bulgarian company to specialize in the production of cables and conductors. Founded in 1947 as a collection of small workshops for electro-technical production, Elkabel is now the biggest cable manufacturer in Bulgaria and a respected international business partner with exports to the UK, Germany, France, Belgium, Hungary, Italy, Cyprus, Egypt, Russia, the Ukraine, Uruguay and USA.

The Elkabel site now occupies an area of 190 thousand square metres, is conveniently located near Port Bourgas, Bourgas Airport and the Duty Free Zone and even has its own railway line with a connection through to the capital, Sofia.

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While the company's single-minded focus on meeting the growing and ever-changing demands of a challenging market has led to significant investment in the expansion and improvement of its production facility.

All the Elkabels and whistles

Rautomead's long-established and finely-honed philosophy of attention to detail and customer service ensured a faultless transition for Elkabel all the way through from the initial quotation to machine handover and operator training.

A fully functional 'contract kick off' meeting at Rautomead HQ on completion of the contract was immediately followed by the appointment of an internal project manager with full powers to manage the project from beginning to end.

First and foremost, Rautomead's test facilities in Dundee produced several tonnes of sample coils of copper rod to ensure that the finished product would meet the customer's exacting quality standards

Then, following a full build and functional testing, an exhaustive pre-ship inspection regime was implemented before final customer sign off.

But that's not all. Because Rautomead then went on to supervise installation, commissioning and operative training to ensure the maximum efficiency and minimum production costs before handover to Elkabel's technical support team.

But the Rautomead service didn't end there. Because a Rautomead customer service engineer visited the new installation about six weeks after handover to review the status of the plant, answer customer queries, establish clear lines of communication with the production management team, advise on quality control, component identification, stock holding of consumables and usage of spares with further repeat visits planned on a regular basis.

Perfect casting

Rautomead's growing reputation for attention to detail and impeccable customer service as well as technical expertise has led to the company being itself cast as a global market leader in continuous casting technology.

And the Elkabel contract is a case in point with the company's Technical Director Mr. Lyubomir Novakov declaring that, in all his 30 years' experience of commissioning the build and installation of equipment for the plant, he has never before experienced the levels of expertise, speed and customer service brought to bear by the Rautomead team.

As Rautomead Operations Manager Mervyn Cooper explains: "At Rautomead we've perfected the whole contract to commission process over very many years. And, while shortcuts have occasionally been proposed and tested, such as customers taking responsibility for partial builds or first builds being executed at the customer's site, we've invariably found that the customer reaps significant benefits in the long term when we manage the whole process from beginning to end".

Project Manager on the Elkabel contract Elliot Boyle, meanwhile, cites the autonomy given to the Project Manager on site as a major contributory factor in any project's success. Commissioning Engineer Dougie Hain for his part nominates Rautomead's extensive pre-ship test and inspection regime as the key to a trouble-free installation and commissioning process.

While Sir Michael Nairn himself points to Rautomead's customer-based philosophy of total Rautomead ownership from project signoff all the way through to after-sales support, a philosophy which led to the company recording record turnover and profits over the past year.

"But there is one other secret ingredient", adds Sir Michael with the hint of a twinkle in his eye.

"Luck".

"That is to say, of course, the sort of luck that comes from an intense, long-term and involved focus on innovation, customer service and continuous improvement by each and every one of Rautomead's employees and partners.

"Because, to paraphrase the words of a very famous golfer: 'The more we practice, the luckier we seem to get'."

Graphite-based furnace technology

Rautomead's RS upwards-vertical casting machines are based on the company's unique graphite-based furnace technology. The company has specialised in this technology for over 30 years. Containment of liquid copper in a graphite crucible contributes to the production of the consistent high quality oxygen-free wire rod and conductor alloy wire rod.

Long-term partnerships

Rautomead works to develop a relationship with each customer into a long-term partnership. The quality of on-going service and support provided by Rautomead Limited is considered of equal importance to the initial delivery of the continuous casting equipment & technology. Rautomead after-sales department are available to provide advice, information, technical service support as well as spare parts and consumable items.

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photo: Mr Lyubomir Novakov, Elkabel's Technical Director with Mr Scott Tocher, Rautomead's Technical Service Manager in front of Elkabel's new model RS 3000/6 continuous casting machine.