

Conveyor Belting Company of the Month

Belting good news from Dunlop

Despite the gloomy world economic situation, Netherlands-based Dunlop Conveyor Belting (part of the Fenner Dunlop Group) is enjoying unprecedented success. With an order book at record levels, they are forging ahead with a 6.4 million euro factory expansion programme.

A new, 12-meter long 'double daylight' press, urgently needed to increase production, has recently been installed and a steelcord production line, housed in a new, 100-meter factory extension is nearing completion. This will allow Dunlop to produce steelcord belting for the first time ever in their Drachten production plant.

Although actual production of steelcord is not expected before March 2013, news of Dunlop's expansion is certainly raising eyebrows within the industry. "Many traders and end-users mistakenly believe that we are too expensive and that there is very little demand for high quality belts," says sales and marketing director Andries Smilda. "The fact that we are increasing our capacity because our order

books are so full proves that there are still a lot of companies out there who actually do want quality and are prepared to pay for it."

Focusing on quality

Apart from servicing an existing base of customers located in more than 150 countries worldwide, Dunlop employ a range of strategies in order to maintain growth. The historical cornerstone of competing on quality and lowest lifetime cost rather than price continues to be their primary weapon in gaining and retaining customers.

"We focus a great deal on companies who are experiencing problems such as premature wear, ripping, tearing and impact for example," explains general sales manager, Les Williams. "If we can impress customers by solving their toughest problems and proving that our belts



provide a much longer operational lifetime then winning further orders becomes much easier because they will have seen the advantages of Dunlop quality at first hand."

According to Williams, it is not just the quality of the product that helps to gain and maintain custom. "Our customers also get the very best technical advice and support. Many companies use belts that are 'over dimensioned' and thicker than really necessary because the belts they are using wear out much faster than they should do because of poor resistance to abrasion. End-users do not always

fully understand conveyor belt technology so they often do not realise that although the price per meter might appear to be higher initially, they can significantly reduce overall expenditure by not having to replace belts so frequently. Dunlop belts have a wear resistance that can easily be as much as three or four times higher than the seemingly 'low priced' alternatives."

What also appears to be working in Dunlop's favour is the growing emphasis on safety, such as genuinely fire resistant or anti-static belts for ATEX regulated areas as well as rubber compounds that do not contain chemicals and substances that could potentially be harmful to people or livestock.

Dunlop claim to be the first manufacturer to achieve full compliance with REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemical substances) regulation



EC 1907/2006. All European manufacturers are legally obliged to comply with the regulations including the registration of potentially hazardous raw material elements. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, many manufacturers have chosen to ignore this legal requirement, either completely or at least partially because of the impact on production costs.

At your service

Dunlop is also rapidly expanding its network of Dunlop Service centres, having successfully established centres in Holland, Morocco, Spain and the Canary Islands, two in Poland and three in Italy. Plans for further locations remain a closely guarded secret. Regardless of the chilly economic climate, things certainly seem to be hotting up for Dunlop Conveyor Belting!

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