

Smooth operator

Stéphane Guillon, vice-president of marketing and innovation at **Winoa**, discusses the French company's leading market position, its ambitious expansion into Asia and how its profilium solution can help wind energy companies to improve working conditions, optimise process costs and maximise productivity.

Winoa, known until recently as Wheelabrator Alleverd, is a world leader in specialist steel abrasives and diamond cutting tools. Steel abrasives are used in the metal industry for cleaning metal parts, preparing surfaces before coating and enhancing fatigue resistance, and also in the stone industry to cut granite blocks into thin slabs. Diamond tools are used in the stone-cutting and processing industry. Since 1961, Winoa has been a market-leading innovator in both these business areas.

Headquartered in Le Cheylas, France, Winoa employs a diverse and highly skilled workforce consisting of 1,500 employees in 28 countries on five continents. Group sales in 2011 totalled €420 million.

What are the Winoa group's main end-use markets?

Stéphane Guillon: Steel abrasives play a determining role in the production processes of numerous activities. Steel abrasives clean, prepare and reinforce metallic surfaces. Winoa produces a dedicated range of steel abrasives for each end market to address specific needs in certain key processes. The company's main markets are road transportation, construction, equipment goods, the iron and steel industry, other forms of transportation, and energy.

What is Winoa's current position within the steel abrasives market?

Winoa is the only player that can boast leading positions in almost all regions of the world, with a global market share of 34%. It benefits from the highest brand recognition in the industry. W Abrasives, Winoa's main brand, is recognised throughout the world, and the company has reacted to the shift in growth towards emerging markets by expanding aggressively in Asia, particularly in China, as well as South America and Russia.

Who are your customers and what do they expect?

Winoa's customer base in the industry segment is pretty fragmented and is split into several industrial end-markets. The company's mission is to team up with our customers, everywhere in the world, to offer them economical, ecological and easy-to-use solutions that transform the surfaces of their products.

What are Winoa's main offerings in the wind energy sector?

The main blasting operations for wind turbines are:

- surface preparation for tower sections (80% of blasting operations)

- desanding and descaling for castings and forgings, as well as gearboxes
- shot peening for gears.

The company has a dedicated range of solutions for these three operations. Regarding the surface preparation, Winoa offers its profilium solution.

Could you tell us more about profilium?

Profilium provides optimum performance in blasting operations at an optimum process cost. The ready-to-use operating mix enables:

- cleanliness: Sa2.5 or Sa3 (before painting or metalising, or offshore)
- roughness: sharp and very homogeneous anchor profile to answer to all wind turbines requirements (ranging from Rz 50-130µm)
- dust level control: thanks to dedicated surface preparation tools.

Can you describe how customers benefit from the profilium solution?

The main benefits for Winoa's customers are:

- **process cost optimisation:** lower abrasive consumption, lower industrial waste and lower paint consumption due to the optimum combination of profile depth and peak density
- **productivity:** highest productivity vs all other blasting media, especially slags
- **working conditions:** lower emission of dust to protect the operators and to preserve the interface between blasting surface and coating.

What are the key advantages of steel grit vs slag for customers?

There are many, including better paint adhesion due to the improved roughness profile, lower disposal costs (up to 50 times less), greater productivity (50–100%), and lower surface preparation costs (30% less).

In all business areas, Winoa teams up with its customers to create added value and bring measurable benefits. ■

Further information

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