

Interview

Revolutionary Ecological Solutions

MFN met Stéphane Guillon, Vice President of Marketing & Innovation to discuss the latest ecological innovations at Wheelabrator Allevard with a special focus on their new mobile steel grit recovery and recycling solution developed for on-site air blasting operations of industrial blasting and painting contractors.

(?) MFN: Wheelabrator Allevard is the world leader for steel abrasives. What is your mission?

(!) S. G.: As the world leader, we have a clear mission: we team up with our customers all around the world to transform the surfaces of their products with more and more economical, ecological and comfortable solutions.

(?) MFN: How do you do this?

(!) S. G.: Every day, on all 5 continents, our 1600 employees assist our customers, helping them boost their performance on their particular markets, thanks to our:

- **4 Test Centers (Japan, Brazil, Czech Republic and France)** perform tests and provide training and solutions for our customers. Our Test Centre in France, for example, carried out tests with around 100 customers in 2010.
- **WALUE approach and 23 WALUE experts** who provide expertise and assist our customers in their quest for quality and productivity throughout the world.
- **WA Sales University (WASU)**

provides a first-rank training programme for our employees, as well as for our customers and distributors. In 2010, 40 distributors were trained by WASU.

- **PREMIUM product range:** HPG, Stainium, Profilium, Prowheelium, Granitium, Stelux. The sales of these products are enjoying a growth of +15% in volume per year, guaranteeing to our customers very significant productivity gains for their blasting operations.
- **Specialties products and our AOD (Atomization on Demand) service** respond to the most specific and unmet customer needs with value-added products having customized properties in terms of chemical composition, size distribution, shape and density.
- **3 Research & Innovation Centers (France, Japan and Czech Republic)** develop continuously new products and solutions to address the current and future needs of our customers even better.

(?) MFN: What are the new innovations you are working on? Can you give some examples for our readers?



Stéphane Guillon, Vice President of Marketing & Innovation of Wheelabrator Allevard

(!) S. G.: Innovation means to transform knowledge into value creation for our customers. I can give you three examples of close collaboration with our customers:

- An innovative hard peening media which outclasses existing offers through high peening efficiency and high productivity.
- A wireless device for full blasting monitoring.
- A high performance solution of surface hardening complimentary to the thermo-chemical treatments and hard coatings, and for a better environmental approach.

(?) MFN: As you know, ecological consciousness is evolving and there is an ever-increasing demand for environmental compliance. What is your vision of environmental responsibility and sustainability at Wheelabrator Allevard?

(!) S. G.: We always prioritize sustainable solutions and invest in environmentally friendly technologies. Our plants are equipped with state-of-the-art technologies compliant with the most stringent environmental requirements. In recent years we have achieved significant improvements. Some examples are:

- Air quality: the installations (furnace and process) are de-dusted on a permanent basis. In recent years the performance of the de-dusting unit has been improved and dust

« **PHENICS will transform our customers' surface cleaning experience for once and all. By replacing expendable abrasives with recyclable steel grit, the abrasive and waste volume will decrease by minimum 90% and the cleaning rate will be improved by 50%.** »

Stéphane Guillon, Vice President of Marketing & Innovation of Wheelabrator Allevard

releases dropped from the required limitation of 20 mg/m³ to 5mg/m³.

- Water treatment: we invested € 2.5 M in advanced water cooling and treatment systems in our plant located in Le Cheylas, France in order to reduce the quantity of the water consumed, lower the temperature of the recycled water, and ensure the quality of the water. Thanks to this new facility, we doubled our water treatment capacity while reducing the water disposal rate by 50%. Our new production plant in Kurgan, Russia, equipped with the latest technologies, consumes five times less water than required by the usual standards.

Our commitment to sustainability does not end here. We also encourage our customers to be environmentally aware by offering them ecological solutions. Our target is not only to provide leading edge solutions to our customers but also to be their ecological partners.

(?) MFN: You have talked about being an ecological partner for customers. Can you give us an example for ecological solutions that you are offering to your customers?

(!) S. G.: A striking example is our revolutionary ecological solution, PHENICS (Productive, Healthy, Ecological, New, Itinerant Cleaning Solutions) enabling from now on the use of recycled steel grit in mobile air-blasting operations of industrial blasting and painting contractors. Being 100% recyclable, steel

abrasive is an extremely clean product in comparison with other technologies such as non-recyclable abrasives which generate huge amounts of dust and waste. Our solution PHENICS, from now on, allows simultaneous blasting and recycling operations with steel grit for mobile surface preparation operations concerning metallic structures such as bridges, penstocks, dams etc. while offering high productivity and efficiency.

PHENICS has been developed as a direct response to changing ecological awareness and the increasing need to achieve better environmental compliance and is based on a unique business model aimed at minimizing the environmental impact of surface preparation and maximizing the operation efficiency of industrial painting contractors and steel rehabilitation companies.

(?) MFN: You said PHENICS is based on a unique business model. What do you mean by that?

(!) S. G.: PHENICS is unique since it brings together a combination of services which is unprecedented in the abrasive industry:

PHENICS Mobile Equipment Rental: This state-of-the-art equipment will be accessible to all customers without the need for an additional investment on various equipment and maintenance through rentals adapted to the duration of their on-site projects.

PHENICS Premium Steel Grit: A dedicated range of high performance



PHENICS mobile equipments on work-site



PHENICS Premium steel grit



PHENICS mobile equipments

steel grit, Profilium is designed for air blasting surface preparation offering accelerated surface cleanliness, improved coating adhesion, and optimum paint consumption through better surface profile quality.

PHENICS Field Technical Support: A team of experts committed to ensure the most efficient blasting and equipment usage of our customers will provide regular technical support on job site.

(?) MFN: How will this revolutionary solution change on-site blasting operations of industrial blasting & painting contractors?



A railway bridge treated with PHENICS

(!) S. G.: PHENICS will transform our customers' surface cleaning experience once and for all. By replacing expendable abrasives with recyclable steel grit, the cleaning rate will be increased **by 50%**. The abrasive volume and waste generation will decrease **by minimum 90%** ensuring maximum conformity to environmental regulations and outstanding cost savings in waste disposal and transportation. The working conditions of operators will be improved dramatically due to the much lower dust generation. Overall, these will benefit maximized on-site operation efficiency with a **savings of up to 30%** on their total blasting costs.

(?) MFN: What has the response of industrial blasting & painting contractors been for such an innovative solution so far?

(!) S. G.: Some of our customers are already familiar with the concept, some have never thought about it. When we introduced PHENICS, they were surprised with the power of the suction units and the cleaning efficiency of the recycling units, even in the cases of lead contamination. They showed great interest in our complete solution composed of rental services, technical

assistance and premium steel grit. Our rental service has especially been a very motivating factor for contractors, whose on-site blasting work projects tend to be seasonal, mostly taking place during the spring-summer period.

PHENICS has been launched in the second half of 2010. Today the number of our customers has increased significantly, extending not only to Europe but to the Middle East as well, and it is only the beginning.

(?) MFN: Finally, how do you see the future for Wheelabrator Allevard and the abrasive industry in general?

(!) S. G.: The abrasive industry is recovering from the crisis of 2009. The market rebounded strongly in 2010 with a growth of more than 10% and the economic projections for the next few years are also positive. Our Group is committed to supporting and developing the sustainable growth of the abrasive industry.

Maintaining and strengthening our commitment over and over to our customers and our industry is our leitmotiv!

We are looking forward to seeing our customers at the GIFA Show to be held between June 28th and July 2nd, 2011 in Düsseldorf Germany. Everyone is in for a big surprise, which will be revealed on the evening of June 28!!

We would like to thank Stéphane Guillon for this interview!

For information:

PHENICS

Tel. +33.476.92.91.98

E-mail: phenics@wheelabratorellevard.com

www.phenics.net

Wheelabrator Allevard

Asia: +86.21.6468.6677-227

Europe: +33.476.92.92.60

South America: +55.11.5574.7272-218

USA: +1.800.3580.7468

E-mail: waeuro@wheelabratorellevard.com

E-mail: waeuro@wabrasives.com

www.wheelabratorellevard.com

www.wabrasives.com



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